THE NO.1 MAGAZINE FOR PLAYSTATION

PLAY

AUSTRALIA

ISSUE 08 JULY 2022
AUS $14.95 NZ $14.95
GAMESRADAR.COM/PLAYMAG

SAINTS ROW

Be your own Boss in the most customisable sandbox ever

THE 100 GREATEST PLAYSTATION GAMES OF ALL TIME

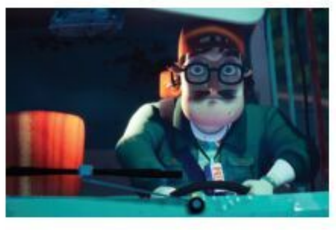
From PS1 to PS5 – we rank every definitive, unmissable adventure



→ HANDS-ON

F1 2022 EMBRACES THE NEW ERA

Codemasters' biggest-ever overhaul tunes up nicely



→ WE PLAYED IT

HELLO NEIGHBOR 2

This time the whole neighborhood is terrifying, which is just great

FUTURE

9 772653 074004 08

PRINT POST APPROVED: 100001753 ISSN: 2653-0740



The source for tech buying advice

techradar.com



SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES

(02) 8227 6486
www.techmags.com.au
future@crmaus.com.au

Future Publishing Australia, PO Box Q1179
Queen Victoria Building, Sydney, NSW 2000
Corporate Web: **www.futureplc.com**

Editorial
Editor: **Shaun Prescott**
shaun.prescott@futurenet.com
Creative Director: **Troy Coleman**
troy.coleman@futurenet.com

Contributors
Malindy Hetfeld, Luke Kemp, Rachel Watts
Daniel Lipscombe, Aaron Potter, Alan Wen
Oscar Taylor-Kent, Jessica Kinghorn, Troy Coleman,
Harry Domanski

Photography
All copyrights and trademarks are recognised and respected

Management
Managing Director: **Neville Daniels**
Sales Director: **Paul Marttila**
paul.marttila@futurenet.com

International
PLAY is available for licensing. Contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities
International Licensing Director **Matt Ellis**
matt.ellis@futurenet.com

Management
Managing Director **Neville Daniels**

Printed in Australia by IVE

Distributed in Australia and NZ by Are Direct

ISSN 2653-0740

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this magazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards. The manufacturing paper mill holds full FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) or PEFC certification and accreditation

All contents © 2018 Future Publishing Australia or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions.

Privacy statement
If you provide information about yourself this will be used to provide you with products or services you have requested. We may supply your information to contractors to enable us to do this. Future Publishing Australia will also use your information to inform you of other publications, products, services and events. Future Publishing Australia may also give your information to organisations that are providing special prizes or offers and are clearly associated with the Reader Offer. Unless you tell us not to, Future Publishing Australia may give your information to other organisations that may use it to inform you of other products, services or events. If you would like to gain access to the information Future Publishing Australia holds about you please contact us.

Competition rules
By taking part in a competition, you agree to be bound by the competition rules which are summarised here but can be provided in full by writing to Competition Rules, Future Publishing Australia, PO Box Q1179, Queen Victoria Building, Sydney, 2000. Late or incomplete entries will be disqualified. Proof of posting (if relevant) shall not be deemed proof of delivery. Entries must be submitted by an individual (not via agency or similar) and unless otherwise stated, are limited to one per household. The company reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to substitute any prize with cash, or a prize of equivalent value. Unless otherwise stated the competitions are open to Australian residents only, of 18 years and over, except employees of Future Publishing Australia and any party involved in the competition or their households. By entering a competition, you give your permission to use your name, likeness, and personal information in connection with the competition and for promotional purposes. All entries will become the property of the company upon receipt and will not be returned. You warrant that the competition entry is entirely your own work, and not copied, or adapted from any other source. If you are a winner, you may have to provide additional information. Details of the winners will be available upon written request within three months of the closing date. If you are a winner, receipt of the prize will be conditional upon your complying with (amongst other things) the competition rules. You acknowledge and agree that neither the company, or any associated third parties, shall have any liability to you in connection with your use and / or possession of your prize.



Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief executive **Zillah Byng-Thorne**
Non-executive chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief financial officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244



Welcome



I was 11-years-old when the original PlayStation launched in Australia. I still remember seeing a demo of Ridge Racer in a Big W, and it was mindblowing. It's a cliche for aging games enthusiasts to say it, but I really did wonder whether that was the very best games could ever look.

Admittedly, I never owned a PS1. My first Sony console was the PlayStation 2, which feels like one of the most historically consequential gaming platforms in the medium's history. It's hard to convey just how astonishing Jak & Daxter was, back when it released in late 2001 (right in time for Christmas!). It's still a really beautiful game, but back then its seamless level transitions, fully-voiced cutscenes, and the gorgeous variety of its cartoon world, were all so impressive that it was hard to stay annoyed at how annoying Daxter was (or was that just me?).

I don't take this trip down memory lane for no reason: this issue we explore the top 100 best PlayStation games, and to be honest, reading over the feature has been a real joy. I don't agree with a lot of it, but that's how these lists work: they're as much an opportunity to have a conversation, maybe an argument, and most importantly, to take stock of just how fast the evolution of videogames has been. Sure, PlayStation isn't the only part of the story - far from it - but across five console generations, and a couple of handheld iterations, the eco-system has hosted an astonishing range of classic titles. Even if you only play a handful of the games featured, you'll still get a good grasp of the strengths of the medium.

It's well timed for the imminent launch of Sony's PS Plus subscription service; hopefully we'll see some more classic games come to PS4 and PS5.

"PLAYSTATION HAS HOSTED AN ASTONISHING RANGE OF CLASSIC GAMES"

Shaun Prescott
EDITOR

PLAYING
Weird West
FAVE FROZEN FOOD
Ice

THIS MONTH'S PONDEROUS PONTIFICATORS



Troy Coleman
CREATIVE DIRECTOR
What do you want to get for lunch, Troy? The answer is always chips. It's the sauce you put on them that counts anyway, and the variety of sauces these days? Bonkers.
PLAYING
Diablo II: Resurrected
FAVE FROZEN FOOD
Chips



Harry Domanksi
WRITER
Actually, everyone answered 'pizza' to this question, but no double-up answers are allowed. Why? That's just the way it's always been. Why question it?
PLAYING
Elden Ring
FAVE FROZEN FOOD
Pizza



Dan Gardiner
AUTHORITY FIGURE
Dan doesn't actually like frozen peas; he prefers pizza. But when told he's not allowed to choose pizza, he spat the dummy and told us to take him out of our stupid magazine. Nope!
PLAYING
Weird West
FAVE FROZEN FOOD
Peas



Kratos
VIDEOGAME CHARACTER
We're still trying to get Kratos out of this frivolous little section of the mag. Troy tried, but Kratos is actually burned into the InDesign file, like some kind of malware.
PLAYING
The game of nonexistence
FAVE FROZEN FOOD
No comment (not real)

Contents



36

The 100 Greatest PlayStation Games Of All Time

Is Nate leaping to number 1 or about to fall short? Find out!

"USING DOUGHNUTS TO LURE A POLICEMAN AWAY FROM A DOOR? FAIR ENOUGH."

26 Hello Neighbor 2



Insider

06 **Saint's Row**
A deep dive into the extensive customisation options that let you be your own Boss.
10 **Square Enix sells studios**
Embracer Group purchases developers plus some big IPs.
11 **PS5 gets VRR support**
12 **A Space For The Unbound**
14 **Evo 2022**
A summer of tournaments ahead.
15 **Sonic Origins**
The speedy hedgehog's earliest adventures, remade.
16 **Overwatch 2**

Previews

20 **F1 2022**
Same old same old? Hardly – with the Miami track, F1's out to attract a fresh legion of fans.
24 **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Shredder's Revenge**
You'll want a pizza the action in this retro-styled beat-'em-up.
25 **Exo One**
26 **Hello Neighbor 2**
28 **Story Of Seasons: Pioneers Of Olive Town**
29 **Hyper Light Breaker**
30 **Nine Sols**
32 **AI: The Somnium Files – Nirvana Initiative**
34 **No More Heroes III**
35 **Shadowrun Trilogy**
35 **The Knight Witch**
35 **Cook Serve Forever**
35 **Madison**
35 **Thymesia**
35 **The Legend Of Heroes: Trails From Zero**
35 **GrimGrimoire OnceMore**

Features

36 **The 100 Greatest PlayStation Games Of All Time**
Of course you're not going to agree with us. We don't even agree with each other. We can't wait to read your letter/email

Reviews

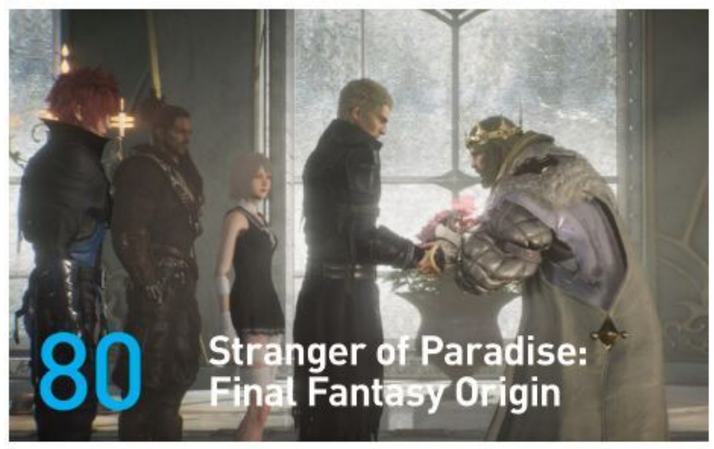
64 **Trek To Yomi**
68 **Tiny Tina's Wonderlands**
69 **Weird West**
70 **Lego Builder's Journey**
72 **MotoGP 22**
74 **Lego Star Wars: Skywalker Saga**
78 **Moss 2**
80 **Final Fantasy Origin**
81 **Slipstream**
81 **Road 96**
81 **Cathedral**

RetroStation

90 Classic game: The Sims
92 The Feature: The ten best games for EyeToy
98 A brief history of... controllers









Insider

Getting you closer to PlayStation's most exciting stories, people, and culture

The chef is in. Saints Row's deep customisation options are cooking with gas.

"Your look says a lot about you, but you can also express yourself with emotes."

INSIDER HIGHLIGHTS

12 A SPACE FOR THE UNBOUND
Nostalgia, Indonesian style

14 TOURNAMENT READY
PlayStation asks you to go head-to-head

15 SONIC ORIGINS
Back to the beginning with the Blue Blur









Make a big bang as a self-made Boss

Volition lifts the hood on deep customisation options for Saints Row reboot

Stilwater and Steelport are tiny dots in the rearview mirror as Saints Row tears away towards a fresh start. This reboot resets the entry numbering to zero, aiming for a new beginning in the Las-Vegas-inspired setting of Santo Ileso. Set to make its grand debut on 23 August, in this game your custom protagonist will take centre stage.

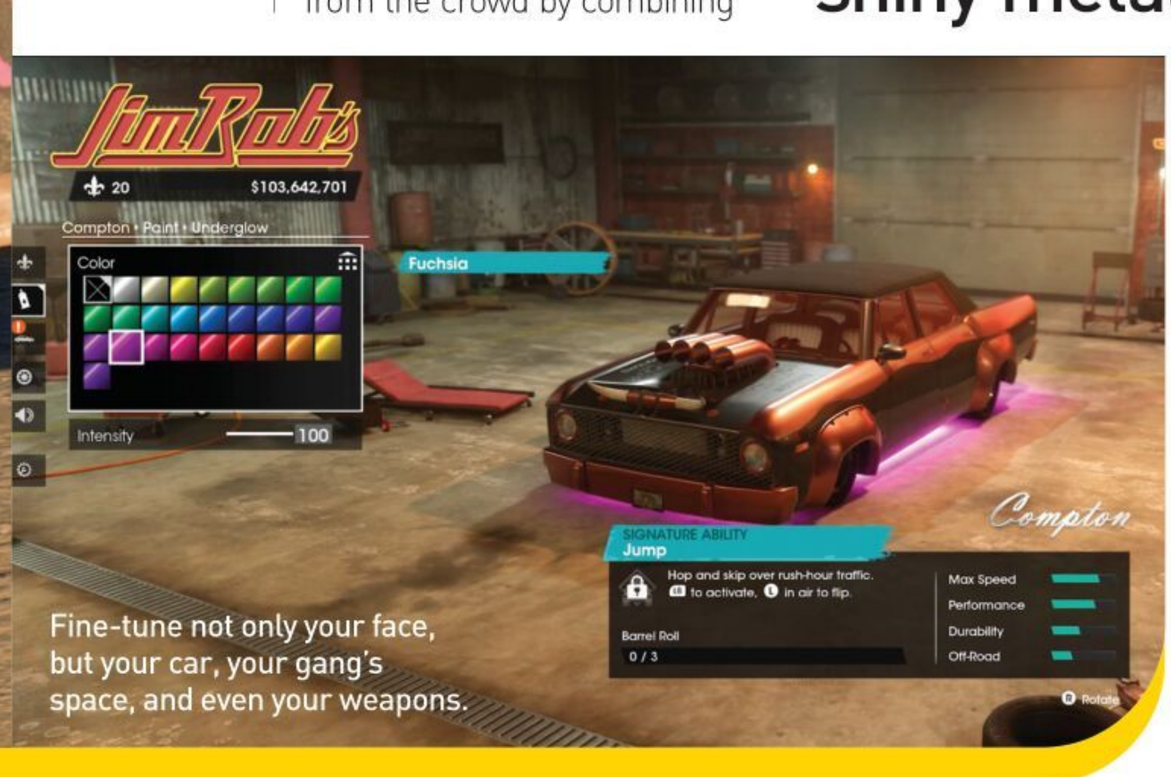
You've always had a wealth of options when creating the leader of the 3rd Street Saints but the reboot takes that many steps further. To start with, you have eight Boss presets to pick and either play as immediately or tweak to your heart's content. There are eight voices to choose from in addition to these pre-made looks, though there's no word yet if more comedic options, like Saints Row The Third's zombie voice, will return. It's probably unlikely, given the reboot is pulling things back from Saints Row IV's over-the-top shenanigans.

Let's start from the top. In addition to picking from a spectrum of hair colours and styles (including afros, braids, undercuts, and more) you can get granular on facial features. Accompanying the usual suspects of scars, makeup, and face paint, you can make your Boss stand out from the crowd by combining two face presets for a memorably asymmetrical mug. From there you can lose yourself in sliders and skins to create a visage that's all your own.

TATT'S THE BOSS

Your options for creating a Boss with presence don't stop there. If you're determined to make a strong first impression, a facial tattoo is one way to ensure you won't be quickly forgotten. But on top of tattoo options for every patch of skin you can't bear to leave bare, there are far more ways to adorn your protagonist's skin. Skin options range from the realistic and the recognisable to the downright fantastical, with shiny metallic sheens and even patterns giving a stained-glass effect on offer. If you want your Boss to look like the metallic metalhead of your dreams or

Skin options range from the realistic to the fantastical, with shiny metallic sheens.



Fine-tune not only your face, but your car, your gang's space, and even your weapons.

sport the multi-patterned look of your nightmares, these customisation tools have got you covered – literally.

These are far from the only head-to-toe customisation options. After settling on a body type, you can then go in and sculpt abs, tweak vein definition, or even give your Boss a variety of prosthetic limbs. Naturally, you can then choose to run around in Santo Ileso in your bare necessities (and there is an array of censor-bar options to choose from, some leaving more to the imagination than others) but your wardrobe is far from an afterthought. Alongside wackier all-in-one



TRYING IT ON

Can't wait to create your own Boss? Saints Row's deep customisation tools will soon be available for all of your style experiments ahead of the game's full 23 August release. In the meantime, feast your eyes on these pages for inspiration.

costumes, there are more fashionable threads from socks to hoodies and jackets that you can layer up – none of which are gender-locked. If you want to tour Santo Ileso in tiny booty shorts, you can. If you want to cover up and really soak in that desert heat, there's nothing stopping you (aside from dehydration).

Your look says a lot about your Boss at a glance, but you can also express yourself with emotes and even by switching up your protagonist's walk cycle. Doing the creep all across Santo Ileso is certainly a choice but it's one you can make for the entirety of the game.

That said, as this is Saints Row, hoofing it is only one of many options when it comes to getting around.

HEAVY METAL

That's right, car customisation is back and also even more in-depth. The usual suspects of hubcaps, rims, and a slew of paint jobs to choose from return, though a lick of paint now comes in a variety of finishes from pearlescent to matte. Beyond mixing and matching your hood ornament with your spoiler, you can fine-tune how your engine and horn sound. What's more, your garage doesn't stop at cars.

There are 80 vehicles to collect, including hoverboards and boats. On top of changing how they look, you can tweak how they handle with unlockable abilities like crab steering. Wackier add-ons are also available – how about a giant ball on a chain to see off your pursuers? – either through upgrade kits or collected on your way through the story. But if you can't make a clean getaway even with the ejector seat upgrade that allows you to glide away in a squirrel suit, you've always got an array of conflict resolution options at your fingertips... though most of those do still go 'bang.'

> On top of changing how vehicles look, you can tweak how they handle with unlockable abilities like crab steering.

Every part of your piece can be switched out, recoloured, or covered in stickers. If you kinda feel like a gun shaped like a gun is a bit too 2013 for your tastes, you can shake things up by hurling shells from a modified guitar case instead. Or maybe you want to conduct your business like it's 1992 and you are the Penguin with a lethal umbrella. Maybe you're too cool for bullets – in that case, there's a potato cannon with your name on it.

Speaking of putting your own mark on things, Saints HQ sees you putting down roots in a disused church. From there you can sort through everything you've picked up from Santo Ileso's various bricks-and-mortar stores and other places. As well as redecorating your HQ and surveying your criminal empire from the second floor's war table, you can dictate your gang underlings' uniform. If you want them to rock up suited and booted in monster trucks, they will. If you prefer them to don the mascot suits and go on a rampage, Santo Ileso is your oyster. If you want the Saints to swap out the purple for pink and glitter, you're the (sparkly) Boss.

* The Saints Row reboot will launch on both PS4 and PS5 on 23 August.



This space cowboy really shines thanks to outside-the-box options for every facet of your Boss.



1



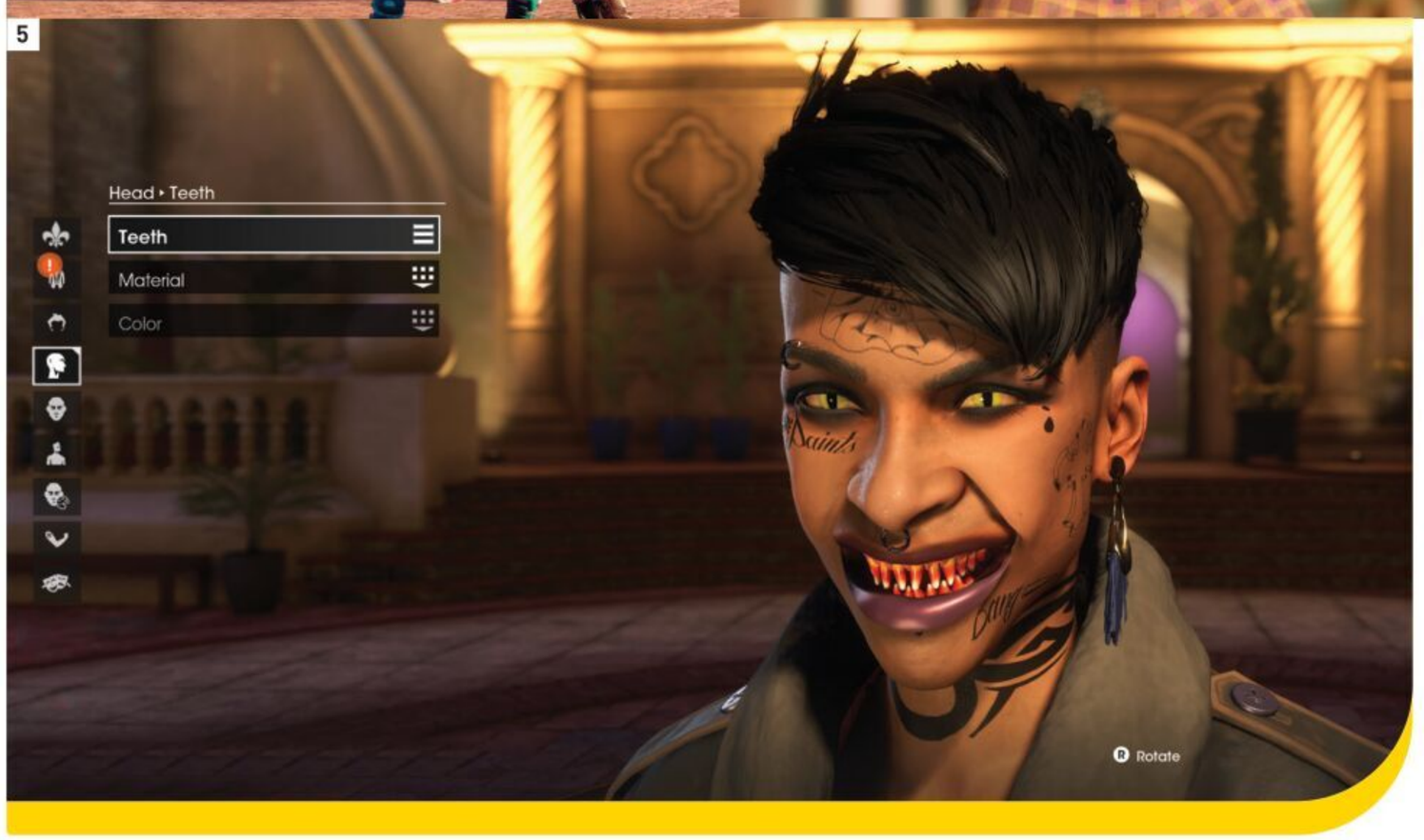
2



3

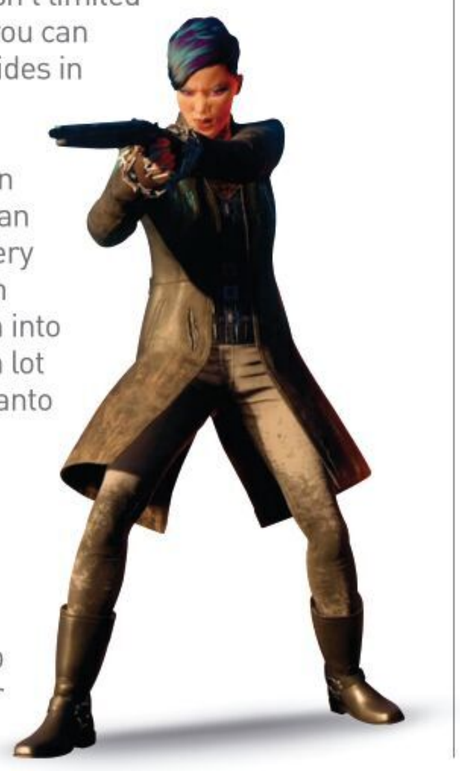


4



5

1 Is it a car? Is it a boat? Why choose? Your garage isn't limited to sets of wheels and you can customise all of your rides in detail. **2** Get a load of this co-ordinated look. If you want to go full Tin Man, you can. **3** You can noodle around with every part of your piece, even rendering your firearm into something that looks a lot less like a gun. **4** In Santo Ileso, you're free to let your very fashionable fists do the talking. **5** Candy corn teeth? Every day can be Halloween – or whichever dressing-up holiday you prefer – for your Boss.





OFF THE CHAIN

What does Square Enix get out of the deal we're talking about below? It's planning to use the $300 million to invest in "blockchain, AI, and the cloud" according to a statement. Maybe it's just us, but we'd rather have more videogames, thanks.



Watts up?

Rachel Watts' rumour report

According to a Bloomberg report, Sega is working on "big-budget" reboots of Dreamcast-era cult classics **Crazy Taxi** and **Jet Set Radio**. It's part of the Japanese gaming giant's Super Game initiative, a plan that involves revisiting dormant IPs to improve the company's global reach, by creating blockbuster live-service games that will generate recurring revenue while maintaining huge communities of players.

Basically, Sega wants its own version of **Fortnite**. Fortnite built its success upon cross-platform play, microtransactions for cosmetic items, and being free-to-play. Bloomberg doesn't state that Sega will be copying that exact strategy, but pretty much all live-service games have those three features at their core.

The games are said to be still in their early stages, but's exciting to imagine what they will look like. With Jet Set's factions and competitive graffiti tagging, we can see it fitting into the Fortnite formula, but it's anyone's guess how the bombastic racing of Crazy Taxi will work.

Drop it like it's hot

Crystal Dynamics, Square Enix Montréal, and Eidos sold to Embracer Group



More Tomb Raider is coming, but could Deus Ex also be on the way?

Time to stop emailing Square Enix every day begging for a new Deus Ex. The Japanese company is washing its hands of it all, selling off Crystal Dynamics, Square Enix Montréal, and Eidos and their associated IPs to Embracer Group for $300 million. As well as Deus Ex, that includes Tomb Raider, Thief, Legacy Of Kain, Crystal Dynamics' Marvel games, and more.

It's possible you haven't heard of Embracer Group, but you've almost certainly played its games. The Swedish holding company, which formerly traded as THQ Nordic (which remains a division of the group), owns over 100 studios across multiple subsidiaries. The company has been swelling in size in recent years, acquiring Perfect World and board game maker Asmodee at the end of last year, and even buying comic publisher Dark Horse.

While $300 million is a lot of money, it's weirdly cheap for studios that house some of gaming's most legendary series – it's nowhere near the $69 billion Microsoft paid for Activision, and it's also cheaper than other Embracer Group buys like Gearbox, home of Borderlands ($1.3 billion) and Saber Interactive ($525 million).

DEUS NEXT

Strange as the sale might be – and who can really feel all that passionate about rich companies pushing digits around? – it could breathe fresh life into more than a few series. Square Enix has never been secretive about its grumbling over the sales of its western-developed titles, despite critical acclaim and sales figures well into the millions.

Prior to the news, Crystal Dynamics announced that a new Tomb Raider developed using Unreal Engine 5 is already underway, and given the positive response to Guardians Of The Galaxy (okay, we gave it 6/10), Eidos Montréal could be set to continue creating Marvellous new projects.

When it released news of the acquisition, Embracer Group emphasised the slate of big-name series it had gained (highlighting Tomb Raider and Deus Ex in particular), as well as the series-wide Metacritic averages. Talking about financials in a press release, the company predicts the studios will continue to break even purely from back-catalogue sales for the next two financial years before they start to release new games. Quite what those new games will be remains to be seen, but a Gex revival has never been more likely than it is now.

*** What do you think of the sale? Let us know: play@futurenet.com**

With variable refresh rates, there must also come variable responsibility.

Getting a refresh

PS5's new VRR support makes Spider-Man super-slick

Long-awaited VRR (Variable Refresh Rate) support was enabled on PS5 in a recent update, and a number of games have been patched to make use of it – though you can switch it on for any game.

Like 120Hz support, to use VRR your PS5 has to be connected to a television that supports HMDI 2.1. When enabled, the PS5 communicates with the television to make sure they're both on the same page with how often your display needs to refresh, which helps eliminate screen tearing (where parts of the image briefly don't match up, which happens most often when you spin the camera around) and poor frame pacing (when the number of frames per second aren't spaced out equally a game can feel juddery). VRR means the television can respond to display shifts, smoothing out things like unlocked framerates and dynamic resolution. Not only do visuals look better in motion, it also reduces input latency, so games feel more reactive.

So far, specific patches have been rolled out for some of the games that push PS5 the most, such as Astro's Playroom, Deathloop, Destiny 2, Call Of Duty, Ratchet & Clank: Rift Apart, and Resident Evil Village. Of particular note are both Marvel's Spider-Man Remastered and Miles Morales. The patches are joined by other tweaks that improve the visuals, but the 120Hz support combined with VRR means they can impressively hit around 40fps even in fidelity mode. It's quite the difference if your telly can handle it – well worth another play.

"VRR means the television can respond to display shifts, smoothing out things like unlocked framerates."

* Enjoying VRR, or desperate for 1440p support? Let us know: @PLAYgamingmag

DEV ACCESS

Life unbound

Dimas Novan tells us how **A Space For The Unbound** blends magical realism with nostalgia for '90s Indonesia

As the Indonesian indie game scene continues to flourish, one development team has come to the forefront. Mojiken Studio has been making games since 2013, and during that time has released 14 games, each release wider in scope and vision than the last. The team's stories tend to be introspective in tone and often whimsical in their approach to topics like loss and death. But with their latest game the team are digging deep and going back to their roots, placing their home country of Indonesia at the centre of the studio's new slice-of-life drama: A Space For The Unbound.

It's a heartfelt story that follows two high-school friends living in rural Indonesia in the 1990s, but this trip back in time is far from a joyous jaunt down memory lane. Creative director Diman Novan tells us that A Space For The Unbound will focus on the wholesomeness of childhood friendship but also tackle heavier themes like anxiety and depression.

"The game will explore a lot of various inner struggles," Novan says. "Some of them are light-hearted and some of them are life-threatening, and our main character has to face these many inner voices that challenge his way of thinking."

During our hands-on with the prologue we get a feel for how the story will play out. It puts us in the shoes of Atma, a high schooler who's tasked with helping a young girl called Nirmala finish writing her story. There's a slight hitch, though – to complete it she needs her 'magic wand' and as she doesn't want her father to know she's skipping school, it's up to us to go to her house and get it.

The prologue plays out like a point-and-click adventure, and it's the first time we get to see how Mojiken has depicted Indonesia. As we walk through the pixel-art town we notice wonderful details, like the pinky hue of the clouds and the gorgeous shadows cast by trees. These small touches make the town feel incredibly authentic. "The road's varied textures, how electrical poles are intertwined, the unique architecture of the houses, and so many smaller things that have their own character," Novan says. "I want to present the environment I love and I am familiar with to everyone."

Developing a game set in '90s Indonesia has been a major nostalgia trip for the development team, who all grew up there. Plenty of environmental details are inspired by the studio's hometown of Surabaya, but many elements come from the team's memories of their childhood neighbourhoods. It's this warm sense of nostalgia that Mojiken wants people to feel when playing A Space For The Unbound.

"The process has been a lot of fun since we've discussed so many things that happened in our school days," Novan says. "We exchanged stories and some of them we added to the game. For example, there are bottle-cap-collecting activities players can do that are inspired by an old hobby of mine, and there are also bubblegum wrappers you could collect that would spell out a word. It was quite popular in the past because one of the letters was almost impossible to find."

> **I want to present the environment I love and I am familiar with to everyone.**

MAGIC TRICK

To get into Nirmala's house we have to borrow a ladder from a construction worker, but he's not giving it up. This is where the game's supernatural puzzle-solving comes in, as Atma has the ability to 'space dive' – he can jump into people's minds and affect their way of thinking.



Space diving transports you to a metaphysical space inside the person's mind.

"It's a mechanic that can be used to look into people's anxieties, but in a magical way," Novan explains. "The magical realism genre has been on my mind for the past few years and I wanted to explore it in a game for a long time."

The construction worker is suffering from sleep deprivation because his mind is full of metaphysical objects that are keeping him awake. It's classic point-and-click puzzle solving, and so after switching off the alarm clock, closing the blinds, and turning off the lights we bounce back out of his mind and see that he's getting some well-deserved sleep on a bus bench, leaving his ladder free for us to borrow.

After getting the ladder and retrieving the magic wand we run back to Nirmala, and shortly after the prologue ends on a dramatic cliffhanger. It's beginning to look like the rural life of Atma and his friends might not be so peaceful after all. The prologue is an exciting start to the game, and we're also left with the feeling that A Space For The Unbound will have us crying buckets by the time the credits roll.

*** A Space For The Unbound will be space diving onto consoles sometime in 2022.**



1 Atma and Nirmala's friendship is pretty wholesome. **2** Rural Indonesia looks gorgeous in the game's pixel-art visuals. **3** Don't get sidetracked petting all the stray cats like we did.

INSIDER

This supernatural teen drama makes us feel nostalgic for a place we've never been to.



WINNING MILLION
2021's PlayStation Tournaments were fruitful, with $5 million of prize money, over 8,000 tournaments, and 500,000 entrants. PlayStation hopes this year will be bigger, with more to come beyond what we detail below, like one-off 'flash round' events.

PlayStation voices
The month in mouthing off

"NEVER TELL ME THE ODDS." UNCHARTED WRITER AND DIRECTOR AMY HENNIG IS WORKING ON A STAR WARS GAME. IT'S THE ONE WE ARE LOOKING FOR.



"WHAT AN AMAZING PRIVILEGE IT IS TELLING STORIES WITH THESE CHARACTERS... IT HAS TRULY BROUGHT ME THE GREATEST JOY IMAGINABLE." SONIC 2 DIRECTOR JEFF FOWLER HAS HAD FUN.

SOLID SNAKE ACTOR OSCAR ISAAC TOLD IGN, **"WE ARE CLIMBING THROUGH AIR DUCTS, WE'RE LOOKING FOR THE STORY,"** WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE METAL GEAR SOLID MOVIE.



Punching up

PlayStation Tournaments raise the stakes as Evo 2022 looms on the horizon.



Don your fanciest suit; these tournaments are offering some classy wins.

Fighting off other players to nab a PS5 isn't the only competition gaming can foster. PlayStation is keen to promote competitive play, with a fresh slate of online PS4 PlayStation Tournaments already under way, and Evo 2022 set for summer. Evo (the Evolution Championship Series) is the world's biggest fighting game tournament, and this is the first time it'll run in-person events since PlayStation became co-owner last year.

Although PlayStation is one of the best formats for blockbuster single-player entertainment, this shows that the company's just as committed to organised play. It doesn't just give us a sense of what PlayStation is throwing its weight behind, either, but of the state of play for some of the biggest multiplayer games around.

ROADSIDE TUSSLE

The PlayStation Plus Challenges were kicked off by FIFA 22, and Apex Legends' Master Circuit is in progress and will continue through to July. Setting a better rhythm for the year ahead are Rainbow Six Siege's Open Series, which will have fresh tournaments month to month, Call Of Duty: Vanguard's Open Series, which rotates modes month to month, and FGC Fight Nights, which are split across a variety of games. There's prize money to be had, and what you're eligible to enter varies between regions (we don't get Madden, for example).

As for Evo 2022, it runs from 5-8 August in Las Vegas, and will be streamed if you want to watch the best of the best beat the digital snot out of each other. The nine main-stage games are Street Fighter V, Guilty Gear Strive, Mortal Kombat 11, Tekken 7, The King Of Fighters XV, Melty Blood: Type Lumina, Dragon Ball FighterZ, Granblue Fantasy: Versus, and Skullgirls: 2nd Encore. It's a big win for Melty Blood players, who would often turn up in comically grimy locations, including bathrooms, to battle it out over previous iterations of the game. As potentially the last Evo before Street Fighter 6 is released, it could be a final hurrah for the current generation of fighting games.

*** Up to the challenge? Sign up for some matches at compete.playstation.com**

The original 2D Sonic games are classics for a reason, and all your favourites are here to celebrate.



Back to square one

Sonic Origins speeds towards the series' beginnings

At a glance, this collection of the Sonic The Hedgehog, Sonic The Hedgehog 2, Sonic The Hedgehog 3, Sonic & Knuckles, and Sonic CD might look the same old same old. But these rereleases aren't emulated, they're ground-up remasters created to run natively on PlayStation.

Core to the experience is the choice of Classic or Anniversary mode. The former replicates the original 16-bit experience, while the latter doles out new content and presents the games in widescreen. Either way, the colours pop in HD. Additions include the likes of Sonic 2's Hidden Palace Zone and other areas that were cut from the original release before being recreated for the games' mobile-only form, and have been exclusive to mobile until now. A Story mode option intersperses the games with animated cutscenes.

Anniversary mode does away with the concept of lives (you have infinite retries), but doesn't ditch their placement altogether. Now they're medallions you can collect to unlock bonuses. They can also be earned in Mission mode, which challenges you to do things like destroy a certain number of enemies.

Unfortunately, along with news of this game comes news of annoying preorder boosts and digital deluxe editions, plus the notification that Sega is deslisting older (and cheaper) digital versions of the games from PS3. That's a real shame, as Backbone's ports were solid. This collection is good enough to stand on its own without the loss of those versions.

An additional Story mode option intersperses the classic games with brand-new animated cutscenes.

* Will you be playing classic Sonic again? Let us know: @PLAYgamingmag

THE BIG SHOT

Heroes in a half shell

Overwatch 2: heroic, but is it a true sequel?

Hours with the beta for the sequel to one of the biggest multiplayer sensations ever released? What's not to love? Well, Overwatch 2's status as a sequel has had players, ourselves included, scratching our heads. It's certainly *different* – notably PvP mode has dropped from 6v6 to 5v5. But it all ends up feeling like an update to the familiar original rather than true sequel. It's so not-a-sequel that the PvP portion is pinned to update the original game for free, whether you want it or not. The more unique PvE (player versus environment) mode is delayed, but that's the bit you'll have to pay for.

With wonky balancing, the biggest problem with Overwatch 2 is that we don't quite get why many of the changes have been made. Big buffs suggest a de-emphasising of teamwork, making heroes viable in any situation but less unique as a result. Tanks are more powerful than ever, yet you still get weird situations where healer Moira is a better damage-dealer overall. Variation is patched over rather than celebrated – there's less reason to reactively switch hero mid-match than ever. Overwatch 2 is in serious danger of being pulled in too many directions, and players are already feeling it. Stick with us as we report back after many more hours next issue.

Numbers Game

We do the maths

970

Days between Digimon Survive's original release window and its new 28 July launch date.

262,800

Minutes before Balan Wonderworld's release, director Yuji Naka was forcibly removed from the project, resulting in a messy lawsuit.

31

Years between Monkey Island 2 and the forthcoming Return To Monkey Island, which is a direct continuation.

2023

The year Star Wars Jedi 2 is pencilled for release, according to trustworthy industry insider Jeff Grubb. The game will be new-gen exclusive.

$226,000,000

The value of the Australian games industry, according to a study conducted jointly by the IGEA and Bond University.

$173

Price for Among Us: Ejected Edition, which comes with a spaceship blueprint, purple stuffed toy, blanket, and more.

gamesradar+

One-stop destination for games, movies, TV, and more!



New Channels: Movies, TV and Cool Stuff!

www.gamesradar.com

Previews



"FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT!"

35 GrimGrimoire OnceMore

26 Hello Neighbor 2

Privacy? We'll have none of that here!

HIGHLIGHTS

F1 2022 20 | TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: SHREDDER'S REVENGE 24 | EXO ONE 25 | STORY OF SEASONS: PIONEERS OF OLIVE TOWN 28 | HYPER LIGHT BREAKER 29 | NINE SOLS 30 | AI: THE SOMNIUM FILES – NIRVANA INITIATIVE 32 | NO MORE HEROES III 34 | SHADOWRUN TRILOGY 35 | THE KNIGHT WITCH 35 | THYMESIA 35

"CODEMASTERS HAS BEEN KEEN TO TREAT THE NEWER RACES WITH AS MUCH REVERENCE AS THE ICONS."

Embrace the new. Miami could become an F1 race for the ages.



FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **ETA** 1 JULY
PUB EA / **DEV** CODEMASTERS / **PLAYERS** MULTI

F1 2022

Miami nice

Racing has changed. Or, at least, Formula 1 has. For the 2022 season, dubbed the 'new era', the real-life sport has had some serious work done under the bonnet, and it's the culmination of a host of tweaks that have been in the works for years. Going hands-on with Codemasters' annual videogame version the same rings true – the fundamentals have been overhauled in a way that mirrors what's happening out on the track.

There are down sides. There's no equivalent of last year's Braking Point story mode, which we loved. That mode took about two years to develop last time, and creative director Lee Mathers says it wouldn't have been possible to include a story mode along with everything else the devs have had to put together, though he's not ruling out its future return.

But it's forgivable. The F1 rule changes are substantial, meaning there's more to this annual release than simply changing skins or the like (though Codemasters has never been one to phone it in anyway). The changes are the biggest implemented since Codies has had the licence, and it's worked with the F1 authorities to make it authentic.

FACTRICK

1. IN THE SEAT

You've two modes, Immersion and Broadcast. The former's more sim-like, and includes driving formation laps.

2. SECOND F-IDDLE

As usual, F2 returns too, with similar tweaks to reflect the changes there, including team alterations.

3. CAPPED OFF

Your team budget is reflected in MyTeam, where you can choose the resources you need to juggle from the off.

OFF TO THE RACES

Sitting behind the wheel, the difference is immediately obvious, and it matches up to the sport. There's a slickness to the speed, and closer wheel-to-wheel racing means getting into the crush is more thrilling than ever, with the pack shuffling much more than you might be used to. Even though pit stops have become less important within the sport, there's still plenty of strategy involved in deciding when and how hard you take turns to keep your battery charged, and when you try to overtake.

The changes to car construction have shaken up the team dynamics significantly in real life, and that's reflected in the game (though you can flick a toggle to even out the performance of everyone if you don't want to worry about that). Changes to format have also given birth to new modes, with Sprint races now available in a weekend format across Career/MyTeam.

The vehicles themselves have a new look, with the construction of F1 cars changing to fit in with the new rules, resulting in much cleaner, more streamlined builds without lots of fixtures hanging off. You can feel it while you drive – the form is simply different, and Codemasters hasn't merely changed some numbers around to alter the handling. Physics simulations have been significantly reworked to account for how the redesigned cars cut through space, with big changes made to both aerodynamics and suspension.

It results in vehicles that feel twitchy and responsive, and as fast as they come. There's a real sense of power in

TRACK RECORD The Southam studio is a UK legend. Founded in '86, Codemasters has gone from making Micro Machines to huge licences like F1 (since 2009), plus Dirt, Grid, and many more. In 2021 it was bought by EA.

1

our hands as we blitz off the starting grid, with more than enough oomph to allow us to catch up and contest for the top spot. Whole laps feel like they melt away in a matter of moments. The traction of the new, larger wheels means there's a lot more movement as cars duck in and out of position, and a lot of effort has been put into conveying the feel of those bigger wheels to players.

As usual, you're free to do a lot of the car tweaking yourself. But F1 is a team sport, and that's reflected in how you're able to sit back and let someone else take care of it if you want. As the devs prep us to go on the track, Codemasters is also keen to emphasise that F1's new era isn't just about refreshing things for the sport's veterans, it's aimed at appealing to a whole new generation too. A range of customisation options means you can start racing with plenty of assistance before dialling back the proverbial training wheels. It's a neat approach to onboarding that puts the choice in your hands, and gets you up to speed quicker than, well, an F1 car.

SUN LIKE IT HOT

That need to welcome newcomers is also why the Miami Circuit features so prominently in this game. (Preorders even come with a special decal to celebrate the track.) Formula 1 has been ballooning in popularity stateside, and the runup to the real-life Miami Grand Prix has even made some fans anxious about the continued popularity of legendary events like the Monaco Grand Prix (don't worry, it's still going to run). Codemasters is keen to treat these newer races with as much reverence as the historic icons.

As we blitz around the Miami circuit's tricky hairpin turns we're conscious that we're racing ahead of its 8 May debut (which you'll have seen by now). While Codies' staff are dab hands at recreating WIP tracks, Mathers cites the studio's partnership with EA as a big help this time around, meaning it was possible to have a team on location to gather data while also responding to the in-flux nature of a track mid-creation. Like Formula 1 itself, F1 2022 is a marvel of engineering, into which a great deal has gone to ensure it purrs just right.

IMPRESSIONS

Codemasters has risen to a difficult challenge, fully embracing the new era of Formula 1 by getting deep under the bonnet and making big changes that you can really feel behind the wheel.

2



3



1 Bigger tyres mean more response from the traction. You can really feel their weight, and how they run up against the track. 2 How immersive you want to get is up to you – you can even control the formation lap and pit stops directly. 3 The rule changes might mean you find your childhood favourite teams in vastly different positions than you're used to. 4 The new builds mean cars move around more. Better protect your position.



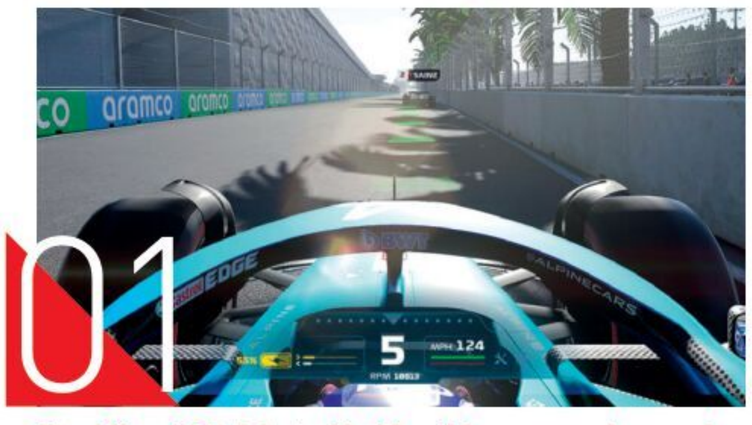






Tracking your progress

Our favourite three tracks from our hands-on



01

The Miami GP debuted in May this year, and proved a hit to watch. Miami Autodrome is as much fun to play, with some tight corners and fast straights.



02

With both mischievous angles and some dreamy turns, Austria's much-rebuilt Red Bull Circuit is as much fun as ever, and a great race for warming up.



03

We have a soft spot for Silverstone, the stalwart circuit that's been around since the '40s, because we've been there the most. It's just racing history.



Getting to face off against classic TMNT villains like Bebop, Rocksteady, and Krang is every '80s kid's dream come true.

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** WINTER 2022 / **PUB** DOTEMU / **DEV** TRIBUTE GAMES / **PLAYERS** 1-4

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Shredder's Revenge

Flash back to the '80s with this vintage-style beat-'em-up

The kings of Saturday morning cartoons are crashing back onto our screens in a side-scrolling bombastic beat-'em-up. The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles have a history of brawlers going right back to the 8-bit era, and this new game will see Raph, Don, Leo, and Mikey tackle Shredder and The Foot Clan once more.

The first two stages, which we go hands-on with, take place in a TV studio that's been taken over by Bebop the warthog, then in the back alleys of New York, where we face off against Bebop's rhino pal Rocksteady.

REVENGE IS SWEET

It's not just the turtles on the team, mind you. The quartet are joined by news reporter April O'Neil and the group's ninjutsu master, mutant rat Splinter. Each character has a trio of stats (range, speed, and power) that impacts how they fight. We stick with Leonardo as he's a great all-rounder, but Donatello and his bo-staff are great for ranged attacks and Splinter may be slow but he packs a major punch. Combat is fast and satisfying with nothing too complicated to learn. When we fill up a combo gauge and unleash a powerful attack that takes out multiple opponents at once, we really feel the turtle power.

Shredder's Revenge has all the style and cheek of the turtles from the '80s, and the Foot Clan takes the comedy crown. In the cooking show area of the TV station, ninjas wear chefs' hats and attack us with wooden spoons and frozen hams. The second level begins with them stealing a tyre from the iconic turtle van. Each level is bursting with personality and jokes that are entirely reminiscent of the mischievous spirit of the cartoons and past games.

IMPRESSIONS

A love letter to classic beat-'em-ups with plenty of humour; the perfect brawling balance of retro and modern.



April is nifty – her quick attacks and fast movement make for fun brawling.

ON THE HORIZON

The next six months, mapped out

02 months



TWO POINT CAMPUS

Run a bonkers campus with oddball students in Two Point Studios' latest management sim.

FORMAT PS5, PS4
ETA 9 AUG / **PUB** SEGA

04 months



GOTHAM KNIGHTS

This open-world, four-player co-op brawler featuring Batman's pals is now new-gen only – it's no longer coming to PS4.

FORMAT PS5 / **ETA** 25 OCT
PUB WARNER BROS

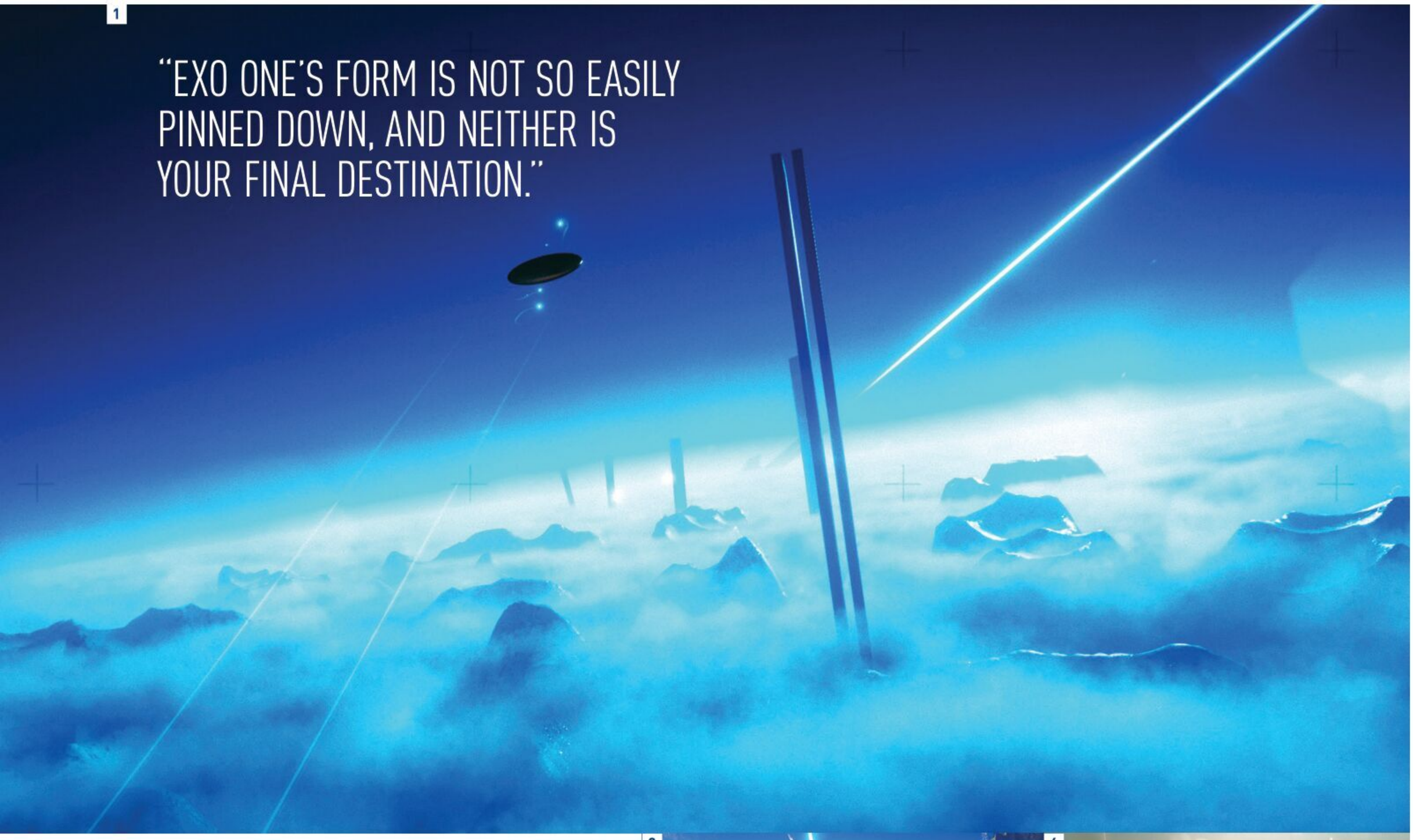
06 months



GOD OF WAR RAGNARÖK

Kratos and Atreus go big and leave home, as it's apocalyptically chilly.

FORMAT PS5, PS4
ETA 2022 / **PUB** SONY



FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **ETA** WINTER / **PUB** FUTURE FRIENDS GAMES
DEV EXBLEATIVE / **PLAYERS** 1

Exo One

A journey of disc-overy

You're going to save them – all it will take is hurling yourself across the face of many alien landscapes in a highly experimental aircraft. Is it a sphere? Is it a disc? Exo One's form is not so easily pinned down, and neither is your final destination.

In the aftermath of a failed space mission leaving only one survivor, the hope you're following takes the form of a blue light in the sky and a vehicle that manipulates gravity. What follows is a meditative experience as you plummet down rolling hills, launch yourself into the atmosphere, and then glide among the clouds. Rain and dust pelt the screen as an atmospheric soundscape made up of meditative music and scene-setting sound effects draws you even deeper into all sorts of alien worlds littered with strange monoliths. At times it's like playing in a Roger Dean painting.

There's a bit more to this than immaculate science-fiction vibes. However, the feeling of exhilaration you get as you go from soaring high to pelting down is a big reason we're chuffed to see this one coming to PlayStation – and with an added sense of immersion thanks to DualSense support on PS5.

IMPRESSIONS

Few titles could get us in the door based on vibes alone but this one succeeds with, ahem, flying colours. We can't wait to get the ball rolling.



1 Can the blue light bring back your departed crewmates? 2 There are no time limits and no enemies. 3 Getting a faceful of ocean spray wasn't on our space itinerary but here we are. Pfffft! 4 You'll journey from sand to sea and across the stars in between. 5 It's a big old sky out there.



FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **ETA** 6 DEC / **PUB** TINYBUILD / **DEV** EERIE GUEST STUDIOS / **PLAYERS** 1

Hello Neighbor 2

Small town, big mystery

After the experience of investigating the screams from next door in 2017's nosy neighbour simulator, you'd think we'd know better than to poke around other people's homes. But no, the followup's swapped the claustrophobic corridors of Mr Peterson's mansion for the open-world environment of a small suburb, and we are ready to snout around. For our hands-on we're enjoying the 'beta experience' – a standalone demo designed to showcase a handful of features without spoiling the final story.

FACTRICK

1. HELLO NOVELS

Hello Neighbor spawned a lore-rich children's book series which has recently reached its seventh entry.

2. SURPRISE GUEST

Hello Neighbor 2 was originally announced as a standalone spinoff titled 'Hello Guest'.

3. TERRIFYING TV

TinyBuild has announced an animated adaptation of the first game and premiered its pilot episode.

The sleepy streets of Raven Brooks seem like a picture-perfect slice of small-town America at first glance. Rendered in an exaggerated art style reminiscent of 1960s cartoons, its lush lawns and colourful homes look more like our new favourite picnic spot than the setting for a tense stealth horror title. However, we suspect a sinister conspiracy ferments behind the town's idyllic exterior.

HELL NO, NEIGHBOUR

Playing as investigative journalist Quentin, we've been sent by the local news service to uncover the truth about a spate of child disappearances. From our radio station base, our primary objective is to sneak our way into the houses of the town's various residents and search for clues to the whereabouts of each child.

Home invasion sounds simple enough, but each house is a labyrinth of Heath Robinson-esque security systems. There's a bizarre internal logic to the puzzles that may satisfy series fans of point-and-click aficionados, but if our challenges are indicative of the final game some may be a little too off the wall. Using doughnuts to lure a policeman away from a door, fair enough. A bakery with a bread key for a completely unrelated door? A little much. Placing wood around a workbench so a guy will carve a fish-head statue key? Bewildering. The wordless clues (often lying close to pictures and objects) do usually nudge us in the right direction, and are head and shoulders above the first game's more incomprehensible fare, but for a series with a huge child fanbase we suspect it's courting frustration nonetheless.

Thankfully, the new open world makes exploring and experimenting a breeze, though inevitably we come up against some trial-and-error situations that grind our prying to a halt. Hopefully the final game can get the balance right – it's the neighbourly thing to do.

IMPRESSIONS

With an intriguing premise and an enticing setting just waiting to be explored, the world of Hello Neighbor 2 could be well worth a visit – provided the mystery isn't too obtuse in the end.

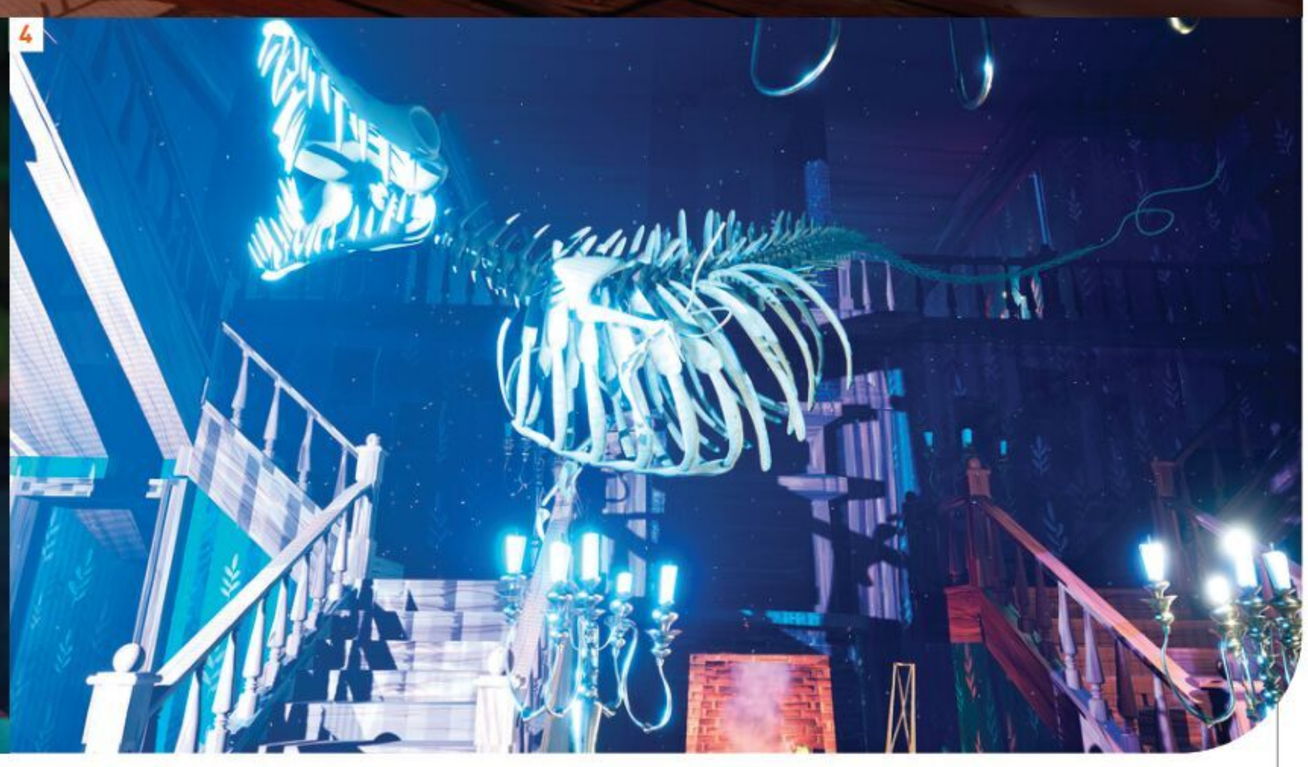
TRACK RECORD TinyBuild, which published Hello Neighbor and its multiplayer spinoff, acquired the games' dev team from their parent studio and set up Eerie Guest Studios. Given its clear focus and established expertise, it's in a strong position to continue the series.



1 Plenty of mounted heads. Perhaps this could be a clue? 2 The police who patrol the neighbourhood stereotypically love doughnuts. Use this knowledge. 3 You control Quentin, an unassuming journalist scraping by on a seemingly endless supply of instant coffee. Quite the relatable protagonist if you ask us. 4 This sequel is a significant visual improvement over its predecessor.







Everybody needs good neighbours

Raven Brooks' top three creepiest residents



01

Fans of the first game will be pleased to see that Mr Peterson, the original mansion's terrifying tenant, makes a triumphant return in the sequel.



02

You'd think that the local police force would be eager to assist your investigation into missing kids, but the thumb-like Officer Nielson is up to no good.



03

Known only as 'The Guest', the inexplicable appearance of this sinister crow-faced spirit seems somehow connected to the missing youths.



FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** WINTER / **PUB** XSEED / **DEV** MARVELOUS EUROPE / **PLAYERS** 1

Story Of Seasons: Pioneers Of Olive Town

A fist full of seeds

We're a sprightly 20-something escaping the bustle of the city to run a late family member's farm. Sounds familiar? It's a story farming sim fans know well, and a setup that the Story Of Seasons series has been using since 1996 (when it was called Harvest Moon). Our hands-on with the newest game, Pioneers Of Olive Town, proves this 26-year-old series is still thriving.

We're faced with a familiar feast of busywork: the old routine of planting, nurturing, and watering seeds until they flourish into a crop that we can harvest and sell to make cash to grow our farm. It takes us some time to get into the rhythm of the seasons and start to earn a decent amount of cash, but even if it's a slow start there's plenty to do. Throw in mining, crafting, and fishing and the holy farming sim quartet is complete and the hours melt away.

Though our to-do list of farming activities feels never-ending, we bunk off to the town for a few breaks. The mayor has asked us to spruce up Olive Town to attract tourists, which means we've got to donate resources to construct buildings and help the townsfolk with small tasks. That's *fine*. It gives us a chance to eye up potential dates.

> "WE'RE FACED WITH A FAMILIAR FEAST OF BUSYWORK."

BUMPER CROP

The only things that hold Pioneers Of Olive Town back are the farming controls. Having to spam the action button repeatedly to cut down trees and break rocks instead of simply holding it down is a nuisance, and makes activities feel more like a chore than fun. On top of that, using the joystick rather than the D-pad to select farming tiles means choosing the right tile can be a finicky process and we end up wrestling the controller like a recalcitrant bull.

IMPRESSIONS

It's a slow start to our new farming life but regardless of the small control issues Pioneers Of Olive Town has plenty to offer.



1 Matching orange helmet and scooter – this farming girl has style. 2 Harvest Moon's iconic cows, all big head and adorable face, make a return and will melt your heart.

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **ETA** TBC / **PUB** GEARBOX PUBLISHING
DEV HEART MACHINE / **PLAYERS** MULTI

Hyper Light Breaker

The pixel-punk RPG has had a glow up

Six years ago the 2D moody pixel-art RPG Hyper Light Drifter burst onto PS4. Developer Heart Machine launched the game's Kickstarter campaign even longer ago – back in 2013. Now the studio has announced a followup of sorts in the form of Hyper Light Breaker, and it's coming to consoles sometime in 2023.

While the game looks like a sequel (or prequel) to Hyper Light Drifter – and the title gives that impression – Heart Machine has explicitly said that it's not, explaining on its blog that although the games share similar aesthetics, the new one "will be a new game driven by new designs". From the animated trailer and screenshots we've seen, Heart Machine is approaching it from a wildly different direction. The biggest change from what we can see is that Breaker is leaping into the realm of 3D, something the team explored in last year's Solar Ash. There are also plans for a co-op multiplayer mode so you and your friends can hack and slash monsters together.

HEART-BREAKER

Story details are light, but the main premise involves defeating the 'Abyss King' and trying to survive the 'Crowns' – whatever those are. Players will visit the land of Overgrowth where they'll have access to traversal tools including a wall dash and a glider. One thing is obvious, though: Breaker has inherited Drifter's stylish look. The main protagonist sports bright blue hair that matches the glow of their energy sword, when enemies get sliced there's a spray of neon-pink blood, and one screenshot shows a slick hoverboard. Colour us intrigued.

IMPRESSIONS

We loved Solar Ash and Hyper Light Drifter, so are totally ready for Hyper Light Breaker, but remain curious about how the combat and story will play out.



Traversal has always been a strength in Heart Machine's games; here's hoping for equally slick combat in Breaker.

A cool teaser for the different characters you and your group can play as in multiplayer.



There's plenty to uncover. What's the true nature of New Kunlun, and what's Yi's relationship to it?



FORMAT TBC / **ETA** 2023 / **PUB** RED CANDLE GAMES
DEV RED CANDLE GAMES / **PLAYERS** 1

Nine Sols

Secrets and lives

This latest project from the developer of Devotion – a switch from horror to platforming – has received a tremendous amount of support. The 2D side-scroller was announced at the same time as a crowdfunding campaign that breezed past its goal of 3,000,000 New Taiwan Dollars (or a little more than AUD$145,000). Seeing this cat in motion, we can understand why.

As yellow-sleeved fighter Yi, you trade blows between solving puzzles and platforming. Combat, borrowing from the likes of Sekiro, emphasises deflection. Parrying swipes or projectiles leaves your enemies open, allowing you to rush in with a combo. However, if you get the timing wrong, you'll say goodbye to a large chunk of your health instead – and that goes for the smaller enemies as well as the huge bosses.

Your feline protagonist trusts in more than a simple blade, though. Yi keeps a Taoist talisman close to their chest for protection as well as to access an array of offensive abilities. For a start, calling forth the Godly Bow allows you to attack from a distance. Conversely, at close range an especially flashy move sees Yi dashing past foes, marking each one with a spectral talisman filled with Chi, and then vanquishing each enemy without even turning back.

TAO AND THEE

Taoism features heavily throughout. Beyond explicit references to the philosophy, Red Candle Games describes its setting as 'Taopunk.' The hand-drawn world shows influences from both the cyberpunk genre and East Asian mythology, with something dark lurking deep down below.

The link to FromSoftware doesn't begin and end with the combat. The city of New Kunlun, where much of the game takes place, is made up of numerous interconnected regions with plenty of secrets and nuggets of lore to uncover. Some sort of cosmic influence has been at play in the city, and Yi has come to town to strike directly at it. The Nine Sols rule the realm and each of their names features in Yi's plan for revenge. Why this hero has a bone to pick with New Kunlun's leaders remains to be seen, but what we do know is that the city is a place dictated by protective rituals, and that Yi returns on the eve of one such ceremony. Few know the true nature of New Kunlun, but Yi may be the one to reveal it.

FACTRICK

1. LORE GALORE

The crowdfunding page has a hidden link to a short prequel comic following a robot called Shan-Hai 9000.

2. LEAP OF FAITH

Yi can grapple, double jump, and wall climb. A spectral butterfly can also get to places Yi can't reach.

3. ON THEIR SLEEVE

In addition to Sekiro, Hollow Knight and Katana Zero are other sources of inspiration for the project.

IMPRESSIONS

We can't say no to a cat protagonist. (They won't listen anyway.) Seeing this kitty in a deep science-fiction setting rich with lore and danger? Sign us up! 2D action is definitely a departure for Red Candle Games but we can't wait to see the studio's take on it.

TRACK RECORD Red Candle Games is known for creating horror games Detention and Devotion. Both titles draw heavily on Taiwanese history and culture for their atmospheric tales of terror.

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 8 JUL / **PUB** SPIKE CHUNSOFT / **DEV** SPIKE CHUNSOFT / **PLAYERS** 1

AI: The Somnium Files – Nirvana Initiative

Have a Psync about what you've done

What's more mysterious than half a murder victim's body showing up in an unexpected location? The other half appearing six years later with no signs of decomposition. New ABIS agent Mizuki is thrown in the deep end as the case is reopened, leading her to seek out the original investigator, Ryuki. It's up to you, dear player, to investigate both eras.

Just like the vertically sliced corpses, this murder mystery is a game of two halves. You play as Mizuki in the present and new character Ryuki as he spearheads the original investigation in the past. If you played the first game, you may remember Mizuki as a supporting character, the inexplicably super-strong 12-year old helping her surrogate father Date in his role as an ABIS agent. Here, now 18, she takes the lead. The half-body killings appear largely standalone from the first adventure, though throughout Ryuki's segments a familiar younger Mizuki also features.

In addition to the two timelines, the game is mechanically split in two, divided between investigation sequences in the real world and dream-diving Somnium exploration. In both, Mizuki and Ryuki are aided by their prosthetic left eyes. These AI-balls enhance their observation skills, and even allow for some light psychic reading (which requires some interpretation). As AIs, they're constant companions to the pair, with Mizuki pairing up with the first game's Aiba, and Ryuki's companion being Tama. While they appear as goopy eyes in the real world, in the dream world they take on forms of their own.

"MIZUKI AND RYUKI ARE AIDED BY THEIR PROSTHETIC LEFT EYES."

FACTRICK

1. HOT DATE

AI-ball Aiba used to be partnered with Date, the first game's protagonist, who helped raise Mizuki.

2. IRIS CRISIS

Idol Iris returns from the first game, with her new rich friend Kizuna apparently a part of the new mystery.

3. FROWN UPSIDE DOWN

A masked figure wearing a reversed mask of a face appears to be an antagonist. But are they the killer?

SWEET DREAMS

Investigations have had the biggest overhaul for this sequel, with new AI-ball functions changing the way you poke around crime scenes, requiring more use of that ol' grey matter. As before, you're able to select parts of the environment to take a closer look at, and talk to witnesses and suspects, but your left eye allows you to take an even closer, more exacting look. Think a witness is holding out on the truth? Wink Psync allows you to peer past what they're saying to take a look at what they aren't, reading their minds and displaying their strong memories as waking dreams, helping you figure out what they could be worried about or reveal an inconsistency with what they've said.

When it's not a person but a space that needs a thorough going-over, you can switch on Virtual Reality to reconstruct an area from advanced scans that allow you to change how visual information is displayed, from a thermal image you can wander around to an X-ray. This can lead to some puzzle solving and codebreaking as you reveal fresh layers of information.

Similarly Truth Reenactment plays out to cap off investigation sections, you and your AI-ball partner taking on the roles of those involved in the crime scene to give a play-by-play of what happened, using clues and clarifying contradictions to get a clear picture of the event within the virtual space.

But you wouldn't call upon ABIS if those fancy tricks were enough to solve a bizarre crime. The feather in the agents' caps is still the ability to Psync and explore a Somnium. With the agent and the subject strapped into a machine, you dive into a dream where you have just six minutes to untangle the mix of truth and subconscious worries before you risk your mind being lost forever.

Time, however, is never simple in a dream, passing as you take action, with some areas of investigation able to bestow both penalties and rewards on you. There's plenty to puzzle out in often-metaphorical ways. On the wrong track? You can reset and tackle it again, changing your approach. With more verticality and environment types than the last game, the spaces seem like interesting challenges that hopefully retain the focused, puzzle-solving, adventure game-like charm.

IMPRESSIONS

Expanded modes of investigation mean we'll be even more deeply immersed in this mystery than the first. We expect plenty of twists and turns from this bizarre supernatural investigation.

TRACK RECORD Zero Escape creator Kotaro Uchikoshi has gained a cult following for his devious mystery games, and progressive attitudes he's not quiet about (there's a sweet LGBT moment in the first game). Expect another great head-scratcher.





4 No, this isn't a spoiler – in truth reenactments, the agents cast themselves in the roles of the criminal and victim. 5 Down-on-his-luck quiz show host Komeji is in for a nasty surprise when his webcast is interrupted by half a corpse. 6 You need to make sure you investigate crime scenes thoroughly, including looking at them through thermo and x-ray vision, so you don't miss anything.



1 "What's cooking, creepy looking?" **2** All it takes is a wink to find out when people are up to no good, though you'll need a glimpse of their dreamy subsconscious to get to the bottom of it. **3** Pull yourself together, man.



No More Heroes III

i FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **ETA** 4 OCT / **PUB** XSEED GAMES
DEV GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE / **PLAYERS** 1

Despite recent Nintendo remasters, the first two games – quirky hack and slashes from Killer7 director Suda51 – have yet to come to PlayStation. But that doesn't make this adventure for geeky, anime-obsessed assassin Travis Touchdown, armed with a laser sword, any less exciting. With a meta, winking tone, the ongoing story almost aggressively doesn't matter very much, instead joyously thrusting Travis into oddball situations he has to haphazardly fight through (his looks were, after all, inspired by Jackass star Johnny Knoxville). Here, his assassin ranking takes to the stars as he fends off an alien invasion led by Prince FU. His colourful cronies are part of the Galactic Superhero Rankings, meaning slaying the likes of Mr Blackhole and Sonic Juice technically makes Travis a superhero. *Technically*. Now go and get wild.

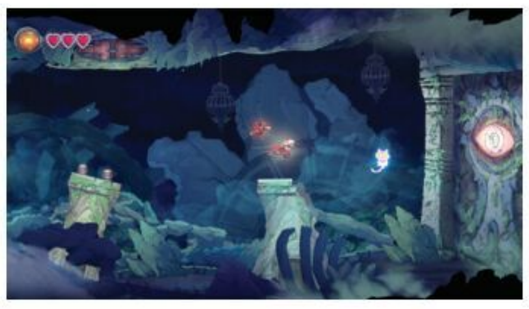
"TRAVIS' ASSASSIN RANKING TAKES TO THE STARS AS HE FENDS OFF AN ALIEN INVASION LED BY PRINCE FU."



Shadowrun Trilogy

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **ETA** 21 JUN
PUB PARADOX INTERACTIVE
DEV HAREBRAINED SCHEMES
PLAYERS 1

As Baldur's Gate is to tabletop RPG Dungeons & Dragons, so Shadowrun Trilogy (Shadowrun Returns, Shadowrun: Dragonfall – Director's Cut, and Shadowrun: Hong Kong – Director's Cut) is to the pen-and-paper Shadowrun. These games aren't super-old – the first was released on PC in 2013 – though for PlayStation they've been polished, upscaled, and feature improved controller support. Each is a lengthy experience that has you exploring the dark underside of the fantasy-cyberpunk world and taking part in tactical, turn-based combat. Presented in isometric view, these RPGs echo the classics, but Trilogy's modern sensibilities mean they're slicker to play than you might expect. An unmissable adventure.



The Knight Witch

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **ETA** 2022
PUB TEAM17 / **DEV** SUPER MEGA TEAM / **PLAYERS** 1

This metroidvania doesn't demand you run a gauntlet of challenges with perfect form. Instead you're able to play it how you want. After all, as a Knight Witch, *you* have control over the battlefield. A bullet hell at heart, it empowers you to zip every which way, using your weapons to mete out destruction and your spells to warp reality around you. Some spells even mimic cheats – but are in-universe, and auto-aim and main quest navigation are available too to assist play. How you play also changes how you grow, as Knight Witches are powered by the gratitude of those around them. That doesn't mean you have to play nicely, though, as you can tug on the heartstrings of those around you as well as simply being truthful.



Cook Serve Forever

FORMAT TBC / **ETA** EARLY 2023
PUB VERTIGO GAMING
DEV VERTIGO GAMING / **PLAYERS** 1-2

Each instalment of the Cook, Serve, Delicious! series has been playfully seasoned with a post-apocalyptic storyline. You get to enjoy the full taste in this story-heavy entry that's billed as a new IP unto itself. Playing as Nori Kaga, you're on a quest to reach the heights of your idol, Chef Rhubarb, who cooks on TV wearing Hunger-Games-like high fashion, and commands over all from her lofty Rhubarb Tower. You need to start from the bottom to reach that high, though, taking your little food cart all around the solarpunk city as you hone your craft and take on side-quests through the fully-voiced story. With a revised cooking system for this entry, it looks like it'll be better than ever.



Madison

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **ETA** 24 JUN
PUB BLOODIOUS GAMES
DEV BLOODIOUS GAMES / **PLAYERS** 1

Even though the teens are usually the first to be murdered in horror movies, this is one setup that the social media-savvy might be a dab hand at – it's all about the 'gram. In Madison, your primary interaction with the world is through your camera, meaning that stopping to grab a quick snap actually is the best thing to be doing while being thoroughly haunted. Like a Polaroid the film is instant, and you need to flap pics around to develop them, revealing what's actually present in certain areas in order to solve puzzles. You don't have much choice either way, as you're trapped in a nasty ritual, and have to solve it to survive, dealing with spooks randomly dished out along the way (so you never know quite what to expect next).



Thymesia

FORMAT PS5 / **ETA** 9 AUG
PUB TEAM17 / **DEV** OVERBORDER STUDIO / **PLAYERS** 1

Where some brutally hard action adventures take their inspiration from Dark Souls, Thymesia draws on Bloodborne instead. The disease-stricken land, plague mask, and gothic streets aren't all the games have in common, though: this similarly encourages you to get stuck into the action with a mechanic that requires you to confirm chip damage with △ in order to dole out death. Throughout our hands-on, we find it fiddler than FromSoftware's fare, though the more we open up the skill tree, the more we enjoy, mainly thanks to how it's possible to spec in a way that feels wholly different. Throwing feather darts in order to dash directly to enemies is a treat, as are launcher combos. Let's hope this crow is able to spread its wings.



The Legend Of Heroes: Trails From Zero

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 30 SEP / **PUB** NIS AMERICA
DEV NIHON FALCOM / **PLAYERS** 1

Don't believe the name – the two games in this remaster are more hero than zero, and it's the first time they've been localised since their Japanese release in 2010/2011. Series fans will be familiar with them, as it's the middle saga between Trails In The Sky and Trails Of Cold Steel, and Lloyd Bannings and friends' attempt to save their city of Crossbell is a missing link many are keen to fill.

GrimGrimoire OnceMore

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** TBC
PUB NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE
DEV VANILLAWARE / **PLAYERS** 1

"Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight!" A chorus familiar to anyone who's walked through the playground of a school in the UK, and one you'll also hear here. But this is no scuffle behind the bike sheds. Tower Of The Silver Star is a magical school, and students let their familiars do the dirty work in RTS rounds of combat, using their grimoires to establish runes to dominate the field. Originally released on PS2 shortly after Vanillaware's better-known Odin Sphere, this is a more thinky affair than the studio's other games, but packed with fantastic visual design that pops on PS4. All that's left is to unravel the mystery of the philosopher's stone.





THE 100 GREATEST PLAYSTATION GAMES OF ALL TIME





Team PLAY argue their way into assembling the 100 best PlayStation games of all time, from PS1 to PS5. From classics to overlooked gems, come and nod in agreement and shake your fist as we count down to #1





PlayStation has been kicking around since 1994, when the original grey box of joy launched. At the time there was nothing like it. The 3D polygon gaming it delivered was revolutionary in a way that no generational leap has managed to match.

That was 28 years ago. The years since have been packed with brilliant games, so assembling a list of the 100 best is a tall order. It'd be easy to create a list twice as long, or maybe even ten times longer. Where do you even begin? You could try to look at things objectively, to quantify how well games have aged, the impact they had, or how good the visual design is. But games are basically collaborative works of art. Everyone's response to one game or another is going to be unavoidably subjective. Thankfully, Team PLAY is rife with opinions, so we made sure each of us had a say.

We limited entries to one game per series, otherwise a quarter of the list would be every God Of War, Metal Gear Solid, and Naughty Dog hit. The exception, we decided, would be for games representing meaningful shifts in a series' makeup – the difference between Assassin's Creed's RPG entries and its earlier iterations, say, rather than Uncharted adding a grappling hook to swing from PS3 to PS4. We put together a longlist, did a roundtable to make that a shortlist, voted on the top entries, then roundtabled our way through ordering the rest.

> "IT'D BE EASY TO CREATE A LIST TWICE AS LONG. WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?"

It hasn't been easy. Debates raged over whether to pick Uncharted 2 or Uncharted 4, and whether you can really call all of FromSoftware's individual soulsbornes different series. [*You can* – ed.] For older games, how do you balance the impact they had on release versus how well they've aged? Should a true great be as good to play now as it was when it was groundbreaking? And how long does it take for a recent release to settle in the mind as a classic? Deathloop might be one of the most impressive PS5 games we've played, but at only a few months old how can it compare to the likes of Dishonored 2 and Metal Gear Solid 3?

Doubtless, there will be picks here that make sense to you, and omissions you'll be shocked by. But that's fine. Everyone's different, and this is a list that represents how Team PLAY is feeling right now. If you disagree, you know how to get in touch – play@futurenet.com

Until then, get ready to update your 'to play' list…

100 HOTLINE MIAMI

These violent delights

FORMAT PS4, PS3, PSV / **RELEASED** 2013 / **PUB** DEVOLVER DIGITAL / **DEV** DENNATON GAMES

Talk about coming in hot. Featuring fast, unrelenting action, one wrong move here means death. Thankfully, this top-down action game doesn't leave you waiting around after each demise. When you restart each stage you're always woefully outnumbered, but this time you have the advantage of perspective and experience over your enemies, increasing your chance of success. Every iterative run is a wild, bloody rush – but the whole time the question of what ends this violence serves hangs over you. The narrative only gets twistier from there, and to say too much more would be a massive spoiler. If this somehow passed you by before, the 2014 PS4 rerelease is worth picking up.



99 SUIKODEN II

Bros opposed

FORMAT PS1 / **RELEASED** 2000
PUB KONAMI / **DEV** KONAMI

A tale of friendship torn apart by war, this JRPG is remembered for its affecting story. It sets its sights on an ambitious exploration of the central conflict, unspooling through a huge cast of 108 recruitable characters (with lots of entirely missable side-stories between them for good measure). Combat takes three forms: six-person turn-based fights; huge strategy-based battles; and one-on-one duels that leave a lasting emotional impact. There's plenty to sink your teeth into – though it's no slouch visually either. It wasn't a great success when it launched; now it's seen as a classic.

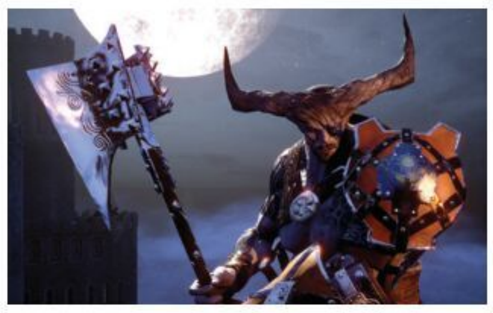


98 VANQUISH

Sliding in with style

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2010
PUB SEGA / **DEV** PLATINUMGAMES

This third-person shooter boasts style by the bucketload. Clad in the Augmented Reaction suit, you can dive stylishly around destructible cover and slow down time as you take aim at your foes. Shots come at you from every angle, forcing you to keep on the move. Fortunately your suit enables you to pull off more than a few traversal tricks, and it's truly a shame that rocket-powered butt-sliding didn't become a genre trope in the wake of this game. This shooter's to-the-point campaign will only take you a handful of hours and is easily playable via the 2020 PS4 remaster.



97 DRAGON AGE: INQUISITION

Give a hand

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2014
PUB ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEV BIOWARE

Let's have a moment of silence for the series fans who have been waiting eight years for a sequel – and then pour one out for everyone who romanced Solas. In this expansive RPG, a hole in the sky spews demons upon a world already torn by civil unrest. It's just as well your amnesiac protagonist holds the power to close the rift in the palm of their hand. Remembered for its absorbing plot and the many paths through it your Inquisitor could take, there's always more to see in Thedas.



96 DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

Armed and dangerous

FORMAT PS3 / **RELEASED** 2011
PUB SQUARE ENIX
DEV EIDOS MONTREAL

This prequel has it all: a brooding new protagonist; some killer renaissance-inflected looks; and *arm swords*. This cyberpunk future still sucks, though, as that body augmentation tech isn't readily available to everyone and shadowy organisations pull the strings from behind the scenes. As protagonist Adam Jensen – he of the aforementioned arm swords, who famously never asked for any of this – you're tasked with picking your way through this action RPG's trash future as best you can.



95 TEARAWAY

Folding fantasy

FORMAT PS4, PSV / **RELEASED** 2013
PUB SONY / **DEV** MEDIA MOLECULE

Taking place in a world inspired by papercraft, this is a truly hands-on adventure. Few games made the most of PS Vita's rear touch panel but Tearaway shows Media Molecule's talent for innovation, seamlessly folding in this oft-overlooked functionality. Running your fingertips along the panel allows you to manipulate the environment, from turning wheels to squashing pests hassling your paper protagonists Atoi and Iota. There's masses of playful tactility in the original handheld release, but if you lack a PS Vita you can still enjoy this adventure in the 2015 PS4 remake Tearaway Unfolded.



94 ISS PRO EVOLUTION 2

Goal-den age of sport

FORMAT PS1 / **RELEASED** 2001
PUB KONAMI / **DEV** KONAMI

We're prepared to be given a red card for this – but older sports games were just *better*. Over the years, changes have become more minute, bogged down in the details of realism (not to mention the siren song of microtransactions). Few have had the sort of impact this early PES did. Even FIFA diehards have to admit the simple-yet-elegant mechanics here are top-notch, and (crucially) the rivalry between the two series pushed both to improve. Returning to ISS2 is a joy; the kicks and passes have a certain arcadey charm whether you're playing against a mate or tackling the surprisingly dense AI.



93 FORBIDDEN SIREN

One to keep an eye on

FORMAT PS4, PS2 / **RELEASED** 2004
PUB SONY / **DEV** JAPAN STUDIO

The deceased don't rest easy in the village of Hanuda, rising as shibito. These zombie-like enemies are dead and loving it, refusing ever to be put down for good. For the few yet-living humans trapped in town, survival means escaping their notice. Sightjacking enables you to see through the eyes of the shuffling dead and pick your way forward by avoiding their line of sight. Okay, time has definitely not been kind to the English dub of this survival horror but the choice to use early facial capture tech to give the cast a distinct, uncanny look ensures the game remains pitch-perfect creepy.



92 OVERCOOKED!

Never too many cooks

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2016
PUB TEAM17
DEV GHOST TOWN GAMES

Few chefs are prepared to grapple with capricious kitchen architecture. Sliding around tilting ships and icy islands aside, even more mundanely situated levels quickly descend into mayhem in this co-op cooking game. Whatever the next kitchen throws at you and your friends (how about an impromptu kitchen fire?), you've always got ingredients to prep, cooking times to keep in mind, and meals to push out the door. Enjoying a sequel in 2018, the original recipe still hits the spot, but you can sample tasty bites from both on PS5 with the All You Can Eat compilation.

PLAYSTATION TOP 100



RETURN OF THE OBRA DINN

Up ship creek with a paddle

FORMAT PS4 **/ RELEASED** 2018
PUB 3909 **/ DEV** LUCAS POPE

91 When the titular ship rolls into the harbour, crew nowhere to be found, it's up to you – working for the insurance company – to figure out what happened, with the help of a magical watch that can allow you to look back in time. The catch? You can only use it at the location of a body, and it only shows you a few moments before their demise. In order to figure out the fate of each crew member, you need to untangle a huge logic puzzle. Rendered in monochrome, it's a fantastic mystery, and one you won't be able to get out of your mind.



KINGDOM HEARTS 2

Disney, unlocked and loaded

FORMAT PS4, PS3, PS2
RELEASED 2005 **/ PUB** SQUARE ENIX
DEV SQUARE ENIX

90 This bizarre series mashing up Final Fantasy and Disney is often lambasted for its overly complex lore, but it finds a nice middle ground here, the extended opening where you play as Roxas setting the pace for an entry that packs a lot of heart. You also get the sense the devs had more freedom here, incorporating some great Disney worlds from Pirates Of The Caribbean to Mulan, and folding in plenty of FF characters (who can forget FFX's Auron saving you from Hades?). It's topped off by improved combat. The series has never felt as tight as it does here.



DANGANRONPA: TRIGGER HAPPY HAVOC

Pulling the proverbial trigger

FORMAT PS4, PSV **/ RELEASED** 2010
PUB SPIKE CHUNSOFT
DEV NIS AMERICA

89 On their first day at school, Hope's Peak Academy's newest pupils are locked inside by a diabolical robot bear who tells them the only way to leave is to kill a classmate, and then get away with murder during a class trial (after which the others will be executed). Playing as Makoto Naegi, you have to take the lead in solving each grisly and complex murder. The class trials see you using evidence as bullets to literally shoot down lies. Brilliantly taxing, this is home to some of the strongest mysteries on PlayStation.



SLEEPING DOGS

The best kind of dog treat

FORMAT PS4, PS3 **/ RELEASED** 2012
PUB SQUARE ENIX **/ DEV** UNITED FRONT GAMES

88 What if GTA had a great martial art fighting system? That's answered by Sleeping Dogs, a crime story centred on undercover cop Wei Shen, who must infiltrate Hong Kong's criminal underworld. The open world is filled with missions both above-board and criminal, and it's tied together with a plot that tests the loyalty of Wei to his career and his rougher roots. The Arkham-like combat of counters and strikes features great animations, and is capped off by brutal environmental finishers that need to be seen to be believed. We'll never eat swordfish again...



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

Stealth finds a way

FORMAT PS3, PS2 **/ RELEASED** 2005
PUB UBISOFT
DEV UBISOFT MONTREAL

87 Sam Fisher's stealth missions always feel like the real deal, and this last hurrah for the PS2 trilogy refines the mechanics into a delicious mix. Infiltrating bases is tense as you monitor everything from how much sound you're making to the light levels in an area. Fisher's knife, introduced here, can even be used to coax lone guards into giving you details about each level's objectives. And what levels they are! From banks to a Japanese bathhouse, they put you through your sneaky paces.

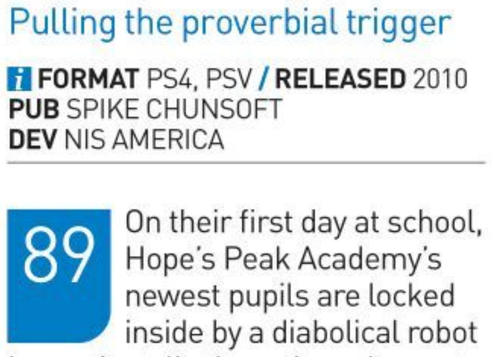


OVERWATCH

All hero, no zero

FORMAT PS4 **/ RELEASED** 2016
PUB BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT
DEV BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

86 Despite being several years old, the hero shooter that brought the genre to life on consoles has managed to stay relevant thanks to frequent updates. It's no stretch to say this is *the* game that popularised the current live service model that's everywhere, from new character drops to lootboxes and seasonal events. But it never lets any of that get in the way of the core squad-based shooting. Each of its heroes has different strengths and weaknesses, and knowing how to use your character and how to build a reactive team is the name of the game, no matter the mode.



RESISTANCE 3

Alien ant farm

FORMAT PS3 **/ RELEASED** 2011
PUB SONY **/ DEV** INSOMNIAC GAMES

85 Grittier than Insomniac Games' usual fare, this is a compelling alternate history science-fiction blaster. Playing as Corporal Joseph Capelli, living with the scars of the first two games, you have to traverse an America on its last legs from alien invasion in order to stop the Chimera from opening a wormhole above New York. The guns, cobbled together from alien and human tech, show the inventive flair of Insomniac's earlier Ratchet & Clank. The historical road trip feels unique too, with standout moments like a creepy jaunt up the foggy Mississippi river, and fighting your way through a doomed diner.

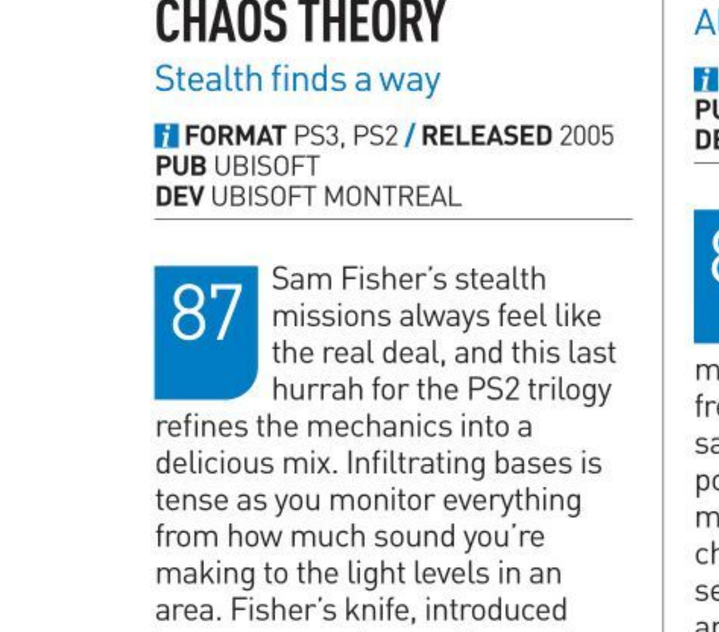


FAR CRY 3

Rumble in the jungle

FORMAT PS4, PS3 **/ RELEASED** 2012
PUB UBISOFT
DEV UBISOFT MONTREAL

84 This is the game that turned Far Cry into the behemoth it is today. Hero Jason Brody must save his friends from pirates by liberating the Rook Islands from their control, and the solution is always in your hands, whether that's hunting down wildlife to craft upgrades, hijacking boats, or gliding above the rooftops. But the real star of the show isn't you – it's Vaas. Michael Mando's performance as the taunting pirate villain is captivating, and set the template for the series' baddie-centric approach ever since. But nobody has managed to live up to Vaas' legacy.

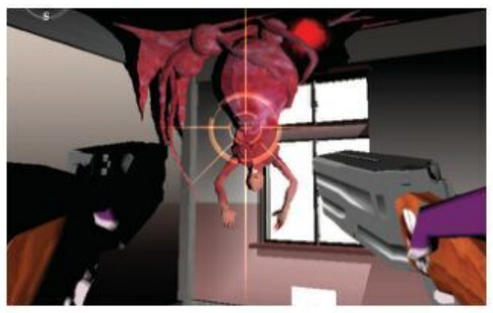


GRAVITY RUSH

Falling for you

FORMAT PS4, PSV **/ RELEASED** 2012 **/ PUB** SONY **/ DEV** JAPAN STUDIO

83 One of Vita's must-plays (though perfectly fine on PS4), this has you zipping around an open world by controlling gravity with the press of a button. Once activated, amnesiac heroine Kat will float, and on Vita you tilt the handheld to pick a direction and then fall to your new gravity, resulting in wall running and rapid corner turns aplenty. Kat's on a journey to recover her memory and protect the residents of the town of Hekseville, which means combat that sees you floating all around enemies to whack their weak points.



KILLER7

A shooter to die for

FORMAT PS2 / **RELEASED** 2005
PUB CAPCOM / **DEV** GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE

82 Director Suda51 is known for cult classics. His games have an almost B-movie-like quality. This was his first title to make its way west, putting him on the map, and it's still the one to best combine a quirky atmosphere (one recurring character is a severed head) with compelling moment-to-moment action. Playing as the assassin group of the title, you're able to physically transform between the seven, each with their own skills. An FPS on rails, you simply choose your path forward (or backward), as you focus on blasting strange, creepy Heaven Smile enemies.



SOLAR ASH

Getting the zoomies

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2021
PUB ANNAPURNA INTERACTIVE
DEV HEART MACHINE

81 Because gaming is interactive, holding the pad and commanding the action on screen has to feel good. Few deliver the sensation quite as well as Solar Ash, where you use hover boots to zip across cloudy floors and grind over rails. You're trying to stop your world being obliterated by a black hole, which means zooming around smashed-together worlds, unleashing huge beasts, and then slaying them by running all over them. Thanks to the DualSense it has a terrific tactility, the thrums of hitting targets at speed punctuating your smooth lines.



TIMESPLITTERS 2

Not splitting hairs

FORMAT PS2 / **RELEASED** 2002
PUB EIDOS INTERACTIVE
DEV FREE RADICAL DESIGN

80 Even if you never touch the campaign, this FPS still deserves a place on this list. The four multiplayer modes are highly customisable, with great map design and bot AI. It supports four players on one PS2 (with a Multitap), and you can link consoles together to enable a whopping 16 people. The campaign has you shooting your way through historically based levels collecting time crystals, before making it back through a portal pursued by the titular aliens. The story provides heaps of variety, from blasting zombies in Notre Dame to gunning down mobsters with tommy guns.



ODDWORLD ABE'S ODDYSEE

Not the odd one out

FORMAT PS1 / **RELEASED** 1997
PUB GT INTERACTIVE SOFTWARE
DEV ODDWORLD INHABITANTS

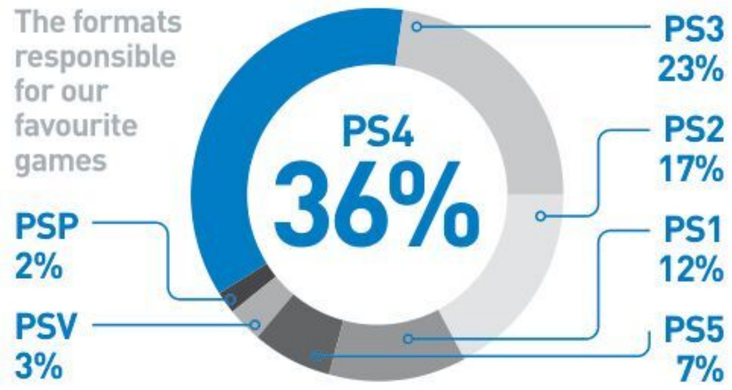
79 There's a precision to this game's design that means it's a joy to play, once you get used to the controls. You see, they're not so much stiff as they follow exact rules. This 2D platformer is screen-based, and despite the pre-rendered 3D visuals, movement is grid-based. Jump, hop, and roll at the right time and you'll always get the same result, the game pushing you to find Abe's flow through some tough gauntlets if you want to rescue all his co-workers. It's a beautiful marriage of game and visual design.

14

Publishers – mostly indies – have only a single Top 100 entry.

Sony is responsible for the most entries by quite a margin, with 23 games featured. Square Enix and EA are next on the list, followed closely by Bandai Namco and Activision.

The formats responsible for our favourite games





TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

"I'm Tony Hawk; this is Jackass"

FORMAT PS2 / **RELEASED** 2004
PUB ACTIVISION / **DEV** NEVERSOFT

78 The Underground series opts for something rawer than Pro Skater. The story centres on your custom skater, taking part in the World Destruction Tour, a team-based competition between Tony Hawk and Bam Margera to see who can wreak the most havoc globally. It's half Pro Skater combo chains and half Jackass as the open-world goals and secrets often involve puerile humour (four Jackass cast members are playable). To top it off, there's a robust level editor, and a classic mode revives Pro Skater timed maps with bespoke goals.



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

Coarse and gets everywhere

FORMAT PS3, PS2 / **RELEASED** 2003
PUB UBISOFT / **DEV** UBISOFT MONTREAL

77 A reboot of a 1989 platformer (unlockable here), Sands Of Time translates the precision rotoscoped jumps required there into parkour sequences that challenge you to time your wall-running, bar-twirling hops around a palace's many spiky traps. The story, which has you rescuing a princess and restoring the order of time itself, provides the perfect way to alleviate frustration at missing jumps: you can hold down a trigger to rewind time. The series peaked here, with the sequels becoming too centred on mediocre action combat.



BURNOUT PARADISE

Where the cars are pretty

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2008
PUB ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEV CRITERION GAMES

76 Racing games can feel like sports titles, new releases usurping past ones. But the streets of Paradise City are a big exception. Criterion took Burnout's crash-and-burn activity and placed it in an open world where every intersection is home to a new event, from pedal-to-the-metal chases to straightforward races. As you familiarise yourself with the city you become used to tweaking your own paths through it, and as you upgrade your licence and unlock new vehicles the events get tougher. Many have tried to replicate its open-world success, but it's a joy that remains unique.



CRASH BANDICOOT N.SANE TRILOGY

Wumpa, there it is

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2017
PUB ACTIVISION / **DEV** VICARIOUS VISIONS, NAUGHTY DOG

75 Are we being cheeky including a three-in-one remaster? Maybe. But Vicarious Visions' polishing of the first three Crash games, using Naughty Dog's original geometry, is full of love and as faithful as can be, though Crash's handling across all three has been backdated to feel closer to the third game. The first game's a rock-hard purer platformer, the second features fantastic biomes, and the third folds in motorbikes and jet skis. Fun to blast through, yet one of gaming's greatest challenges.

TELLTALE'S THE WALKING DEAD

Bring out your dead

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2012 / **PUB** TELLTALE GAMES / **DEV** TELLTALE GAMES



74 True to Telltale's adventure-game roots, yet with a stronger narrative throughline, The Walking Dead was a revelation. Unburdened by too many connections to the source material, Lee Everett's journey to escape the zombie apocalypse while protecting Clementine, a young girl he meets by chance, always feels grounded, tense, and unpredictable. You constantly have to make choices, there's always time pressure on the important decisions, and even good outcomes usually come at a cost. What will you sacrifice to save the ones you love?



DRAGON QUEST XI: ECHOES OF AN ELUSIVE AGE

There and back again

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2017
PUB SQUARE ENIX / **DEV** SQUARE ENIX

73 Staunchly old-school, anyone who's played a classic JRPG will know what to expect from this: questing from town to town, running through enemy-filled fields and engaging in turn-based battles. However, DQ11 does all of that very well, with a sleek modern feel. The colourful Toriyama visuals have never looked better, and the story and characters are packed with charm (campy, confident Sylvando is a particular highlight). In traditional fashion, the main quest is just the beginning.



DAYS GONE

Freaker feature

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2019
PUB SONY / **DEV** BEND STUDIO

72 Thought you could play any open world game in your sleep? Think again. The post-apocalypse in which biker Deacon St John finds himself constantly presents the unexpected. Groups of Freakers (zombies, basically), swarm the world, their reactive nature something you always need to consider, whether that results in you diverting around them, or luring them towards enemies to cause chaos you can take advantage of. There's a tactility to getting about too, fuel conservation a key consideration when using your bike. A sequel seems unlikely, but we'd love to see one.



MONSTER HUNTER: WORLD

Axing wyverns big questions

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2018
PUB CAPCOM / **DEV** CAPCOM

71 Fighting giant beasties with equally massive hammers is always awesome, but the Monster Hunter series has frequently felt too complex to be approachable. Before World, that is. Sanding down almost every rough edge, the huge continuous maps home to many nasty beasties are always easy to navigate, and sending up a flare to call in co-op pals or randos a breeze. Monsters have huge health bars so each battle really feels like an extended hunt. Over time you feel a genuine learned mastery seep into your reactions.



HADES

Heck of a good time

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2021
PUB SUPERGIANT GAMES
DEV SUPERGIANT GAMES

70 In this roguelike, dying is a core part of the experience. After all, you're already in Hell. Each time Zagreus fails to escape his father Hades' kingdom, he can unlock weapons to aid in his battles, and chat with the residents of his underworld manor, grumpy dad and pup Cerberus included. Nothing pushes you to try just 'one more go' better than this, and that addictiveness is reinforced by well-telegraphed options, whether that's the chance to get power-ups from your aunts and uncles, or simply markers helping you balance the risk/reward on the next room you tackle.



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II

Staying on target

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2017
PUB EA / **DEV** DICE

69 The Force might not have been strong with this at launch, but after its training it became more powerful than we could have imagined. The core experience sees you taking part in dynamic multiplayer campaigns that evolve from on-planet skirmishes to spaceship sieges, bringing all three eras of movies to life. But the extra modes are just as deep, from space dogfights to 6v6 heroes vs villains, and Ewok Hunt, in which a team of the cuddly bears get terrifying, picking off a lone stormtrooper unit from the shadows on Endor.



JAK II: RENEGADE

Unleash the Dark Jak within

FORMAT PS4, PS3, PS2
RELEASED 2003 / **PUB** SONY
DEV NAUGHTY DOG

68 Relocating platformer duo Jak & Daxter from a colourful, bouncy world to a grimdark dystopia and giving their game a GTA-like structure was an odd choice, but it's one that *somehow* works. Decent hover-vehicle physics combine with inventive gun design and arcadey, almost shoot-'em-up-like aiming to complement returning platforming sections. Sure, Jak suddenly finding his voice and using it to spout lightweight curses might be a little bit too edgy, but for the most part the mystery of how and why they ended up in the futuristic Haven City is compelling.



GUILTY GEAR STRIVE

Rock and roll rumble

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2021
PUB BANDAI NAMCO
DEV ARC SYSTEM WORKS

67 Anime fighters don't get much better than this. What might appear 2D at a glance is actually in 3D, but the shaders and visual effects give it the look of a handcrafted cartoon. Strive is perhaps the most reined-in any fighter in the subgenre has ever been, chunky animations and a slightly slower pace making the action easy to follow, and stripped-back combos remaining flashy while making your options in the midst of battle more obvious. All accompanied, of course, by an absolutely rocking soundtrack. Turn it up, grab a friend, and get whacking.



SPYRO REIGNITED TRILOGY

Through the fire and flames

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2018
PUB ACTIVISION / **DEV** TOYS FOR BOB

66 Perhaps, like Crash, this is a cheeky pick, but the visual overhaul given to Spyro's PS1 trilogy (Spyro The Dragon, Spyro 2: Ripto's Rage! and Spyro: Year Of The Dragon) is transformative, giving those old games a look that's not out of step with modern-day animated movies while retaining the core charm. The fantastical worlds look even more fairytale, and, the dragons Spyro rescues have all been redesigned as himbo dads. Each game is filled with levels and things to collect, and just like any good dragon you *will* want to grab all the treasure.

MIRROR'S EDGE

I know all the games you play

FORMAT PS3 / **RELEASED** 2008 / **PUB** EA / **DEV** DICE



65

Theoretically, the chances of this game even existing were phenomenally low. In the late noughties, EA was often criticised by its audience for playing it too safe with the games that it chose to publish, often sticking with popular licences and long-running series. The developer, DICE, concentrated on making Battlefield titles in the years before and after this game's release. Yet here was something fresh and new in several ways.

Context is important. At the time, the industry was churning out dozens of (mostly first-person) shooters that dealt in big guns and shades of grey, brown, and beige. Mirror's Edge burst onto the scene offering a futuristic world soaked in gloriously bright colours. The player character, Faith, wasn't a battle-hardened soldier; instead, she was essentially a superpowered postal worker, using incredible parkour skills to navigate city rooftops in order to avoid the overzealous authorities.

ON REFLECTION

While the game is first-person, there's very little shooting. You can pick up guns from disarmed enemies, but they limit Faith's movement, and ammunition runs out almost immediately. Instead, Mirror's Edge is all about jumping, climbing, and wallrunning to avoid combat rather than engage in it. You can even nab a trophy for completing the game without firing a single bullet.

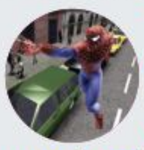
> "JUMPING, CLIMBING, AND WALLRUNNING TO AVOID COMBAT."

While it's a very linear game – success comes from identifying the correct route through a level, and navigating it as flawlessly as possible – it's nonetheless an immensely satisfying one. Seeing the world through Faith's eyes, and catching glimpses of her arms and legs as you hurl yourself over, under, and around all manner of obstacles, you can almost imagine that you're performing these death-defying stunts yourself. Such is the challenge and joy to be had from the parkour, there are even time trial courses with online leaderboards. It was successful enough to spawn a much-deserved sequel, and we still hope to see a third game one day.

CLOSE BUT NO CIGAR

The classics that didn't quite make the cut

SPIDER-MAN 2



This open-world webswinger is iconic for a reason. A movie tie-in, it went hard on the physics: Spidey's webs actually connect to buildings in New York to generate momentum. It also greatly expanded on the second Sam Raimi movie with additional storylines, introducing Black Cat and having Mysterio challenge you to swing around the Statue Of Liberty. But we couldn't help but feel our memories were a little bit too rose-tinted. It was fun to revisit, but the masterpiece we remembered it was not. And so it didn't make it onto our list.

PROJECT ZERO II: CRIMSON BUTTERFLY



We're still baffled that the fourth game received a remaster instead of this one. It's one of the scariest horror games we've played. Trapped in a haunted village, your twin sister is kidnapped, and it's up to you, armed only with a supernatural camera, to save her. You have to wait for ghosts to get near to harming you before you can deal with them. But there's a little too much clunk to the proceedings, and too much back and forthing.

TITANFALL 2



Home to one of the most inventive single-player FPS campaigns we've played, it pained us to cut this. Your relationship with AI-mech BT-7274 is a joy, the parkour mechanics make shooting feel dynamic, and the level Effect And Cause, where you hop between timelines, is masterful – but that's is an small slice of a now-dead shooter that's been usurped by Respawn's very different Apex Legends.



LEGO CITY UNDERCOVER

A great way to pick up studs

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2017
PUB WARNER BROS INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT / **DEV** TT FUSION

64 Considering how rare it is nowadays for a Lego game to *not* use a movie licence, it's perhaps surprising that one of the few that doesn't is the very best. The city of the title is an open-world delight full of vehicles, jokes, surprises, and costumes. That's not to take away from the main campaign, which is worth playing for the script alone. The writing is hilarious, nodding at cop shows and movies from Columbo to The Shawshank Redemption. It's no exaggeration to say that this is one of the funniest games on PlayStation. If you've ever enjoyed a Lego game, this is essential.



GUITAR HERO 3: LEGENDS OF ROCK

I've got the power chords

FORMAT PS3, PS2 / **RELEASED** 2007
PUB ACTIVISION / **DEV** NEVERSOFT

61 There are a few games that make us wish for full backwards compatibility so much that it physically hurts, and this is one of them. Who would've guessed that pretending to play a fake plastic guitar would turn out to be such darn fun? And you don't *need* Tom Morello or Slash as your avatar or opponent, but you'll never hear us complaining about it. Higher difficulties are arguably *too* tough, but oh, what a soundtrack. School's Out, Cherub Rock, Barracuda, Paint It Black... perfect choices to make you feel like a true rock god.



STAR WARS JEDI: FALLEN ORDER

No need to Force us to play

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2019
PUB ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEV RESPAWN

63 There have been enough Star Wars games to fill a sarlacc pit, but this one deserves special mention. Admittedly, it's disappointing to see that the hero in this universe stuffed full of alien races is a white male human with an American accent, but it's still a great experience for any Star Wars fan. Everything looks, sounds, and *feels* just like it should, as you throw stormtroopers around with the Force and deflect laser blasts with your lightsaber. There's quite the cameo at the end of the story, too...



ULTRA STREET FIGHTER IV

Ken you believe the hype?

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2014
PUB CAPCOM / **DEV** CAPCOM

60 There are an awful lot of Street Fighters to choose from (and most of them seem to be versions of Street Fighter II), but this one is a great place to settle. This list wouldn't be complete without at least one, after all. Street Fighter IV bears all the hallmarks of the series, in particular having characters that vary greatly yet balance out surprisingly well, and an accessible moveset that allows for both casual and advanced play. The Ultra update rained down a storm of new material too, including new characters like Elena and Hugo, stages, and more fighter variants, and techniques.

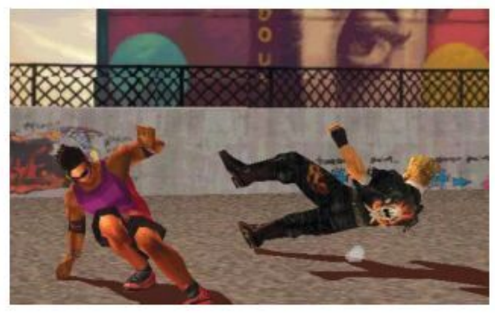


SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES

Stealthily stole our hearts

FORMAT PS3, PS2 / **RELEASED** 2007
PUB SONY / **DEV** SUCKER PUNCH

62 Stealth mechanics are everywhere nowadays, and the platforming genre is almost as old as the game industry itself. But a game that combines the two? The Sly series not only makes it work, but makes it work wonderfully. Band Of Thieves isn't just fun (and funny), it introduced elements such as a health bar, enemies that don't go down in one hit, and levels where you take control of Sly's buddies, Bentley (a turtle) and Murray (a hippo). We hope that the rumours of a new entry in development are true – we'd love to see the suave Sly sneak back onto the scene!



TEKKEN 3

You gave me a fight there

FORMAT PS1 / **RELEASED** 1998
PUB SONY / **DEV** NAMCO

59 The third Tekken game was an important one in the history of the series. For one thing, it iterated on previous games with a number of small but important additions and improvements, not least the ability to dodge moves and confuse your opponent by moving in and out of the background. (It also included the side-scrolling curio Tekken Force.) Set a couple of decades after the previous games, Tekken 3 saw the first appearance of characters such as Hwoarang and Jin Kazama, who are now series staples. Most importantly of all, it was and is fun to play, a slow and steady dance of violence.

APEX LEGENDS

In France, they call it Legends with cheese

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **YEAR** 2019 / **PUB** ELECTRONIC ARTS / **DEV** RESPAWN

58 There's been no shortage of battle royale games in the last few years. The success of Apex Legends is therefore unlikely on a purely statistical level, yet it continues to thrive. Perhaps it's partly due to the ferociously bold, bright art, which contrasts starkly with the dull landscapes of PUBG and Warzone. The dynamic Titanfall-style movement system does it no harm, and neither do the jumpmaster and ping features that help teams work together. Rock-solid FPS mechanics ensure it'll remain popular for years to come.



UNTIL DAWN

Get in there, my sun

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2015 / **PUB** SONY / **DEV** SUPERMASSIVE GAMES



57 The wonderful thing about videogames is that they can be almost anything. There's nothing wrong with losing yourself in a teen slasher, and with Until Dawn, Supermassive set out to allow you to do that to a depth that movies simply can't provide. With high production values, and a cast that includes Rami Malek and Hayden Panettiere, this choice-driven adventure in which anyone and everyone can die sweeps you up and hurls you from moment to moment without complaint. You'll come out the other end wondering what could have been, and you might even find yourself one of the many who go through the horror again in order to find out.



THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

Taken an arrow in the knee?

FORMAT PS5, PS4, PS3
RELEASED 2011 / **PUB** BETHESDA
DEV BETHESDA

56 This has been rereleased a comical number of times, but there's a reason for that. It's not only one of the greatest Elder Scrolls games to date, it's also one of the best, most immersive RPGs in all videogames. Combat is a little clunky, especially when played today, but the breadth and depth of the open world hides a hundred different stories for you to both discover and make. And who can resist the prospect of wielding magic spells? The introduction of dragons is just the cherry on this multilayered fantasy cake.



DOOM

Go to hell! You'll like it

FORMAT PS1 / **RELEASED** 1995
PUB GT INTERACTIVE
DEV ID SOFTWARE, WILLIAMS ENTERTAINMENT

55 Few games have played a more important part in helping to establish and popularise a whole genre. Although modern FPSs are light years ahead of this old timer, it remains an enjoyable challenge to this day. PlayStation owners had to wait a few years for Doom to make the journey from PC, but their patience was rewarded with a version that combined levels from both of the first two games, as well as seven all-new levels. There was even multiplayer... though you needed two consoles, two tellies, and two Link cables for that.



DEVIL MAY CRY 5

We're holding out for a Nero

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2019
PUB CAPCOM / **DEV** CAPCOM

54 Hard to believe as it is, this series started life as a Resident Evil 4 prototype. Both franchises feature monsters and unrepentantly silly cutscenes, but there the similarities end. Devil May Cry is all about ripping through demons as quickly and stylishly as possible, and nowhere is this celebrated more than in the fifth mainline entry. Three characters plus one magical prosthetic arm multiplied by countless enemies equals manic fun. Anybody can appreciate saving the world through fantastical violence, while the most dedicated fan will be chasing those elusive SSS ranks for months.



SEKIRO: SHADOWS DIE TWICE

Hips don't die (a third time)

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2019
PUB ACTIVISION / **DEV** FROMSOFTWARE

53 Yes it's a FromSoftware game but, no, it's not a Souls title. It's not even a souls*like* (although it's arguably of a similar difficulty). Taking place during Japan's Sengoku period, your character can instantly kill enemies through stealth, while direct combat is more about breaking through your opponent's defences for a single deadly blow than chipping away at their health. Gadgets such as the grappling hook and Flame Vent help distance Sekiro from Souls, making the journey its shinobi embarks upon very much his own.



RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

Time to race the music

FORMAT PS1 / **RELEASED** 1999
PUB SONY / **DEV** NAMCO

52 The final entry in the blockbuster series on PS1, and one that set some important precedents for later games to follow. It was, for example, the first Ridge Racer to feature a split-screen mode, allowing two people to race one another. It also saw the soundtrack branch out from the series' previous dedication to rave music, introducing tunes from a variety of different but related genres. Later games may have improved upon Type 4 in terms of graphics and number of tracks, but the gleefully unrealistic powerslides and pure sense of joy reach a heady peak right here.



SPEC OPS: THE LINE

Spec's gun give it to ya

FORMAT PS3 / **RELEASED** 2012
PUB 2K GAMES
DEV YAGER DEVELOPMENT

51 On the surface, just another third-person oorah military shooter; another tale of American troops saving the inhabitants of a foreign country from themselves. There are plenty of familiar elements such as a cover system, a variety of realistic weapons, and violent set-pieces. *That is the point.* As the story progresses, you realise that you and your unit are not clean-cut good guys, and war is much more horrific and complicated than games such as this like to pretend. Yet importantly, it *is* a fun cover shooter. You enjoy yourself – but should you?



PORTAL 2

Our report on the Portal port

FORMAT PS3 / **RELEASED** 2011
PUB VALVE / **DEV** VALVE

50 No game is perfect but, at its very best moments, this one comes closer to perfection than it has any right to. The fundamental concept of the Portal games is simple: you're exploring a disused science complex; your portal gun can produce one entrance portal and one exit portal, and you use it to reach and manipulate objects and places that are otherwise out of bounds. Puzzles soon acquire a deliciously wicked complexity, yet frustration is kept at bay by the subtle tugging of your own curiosity, and also by a smart, hilarious script that is perfectly delivered at every turn.



SILENT HILL 2

We couldn't keep quiet about it

FORMAT PS2 / **RELEASED** 2001
PUB KONAMI / **DEV** TEAM SILENT

49 Horror, arguably more than any other genre, has the potential for allegory and multilayered storytelling, yet it's frustratingly rare for videogames to take advantage of this. Silent Hill 2 is a notable exception. This legendary survival horror draws upon themes such as grief, guilt, and sexual frustration not only for its narrative but also for its iconic enemies such as Pyramid Head and the Bubble Head Nurse. While some of the mechanics haven't aged nearly as gracefully as the writing, it remains a memorable experience that you owe it to yourself to play through at least once.

ALIEN ISOLATION

Walk, don't run

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2014 / **PUB** SEGA / **DEV** CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

48

Looking for closure in the wake of her mother's disappearance, Amanda Ripley takes on a salvage job to retrieve the Nostromo's flight recorder. Unfortunately, nothing can prepare Amanda for what finds *her* out in the merciless void.

Of course, you know *exactly* what's coming. And so, with a tense atmosphere so thick you could carve through it with a butter knife, you'll be jumping at every shadow as you creep through the retro-futuristic Sevastopol space station, searching for keycards and hacking doors to move on. Gunning down anything that moves is far from your best bet for survival, as any noise risks drawing the attention of the xenomorph. You're not even safe while saving thanks to sophisticated AI that ensures the creature is always far closer than you would like. Remember: out here, there are only the quiet and the dead.

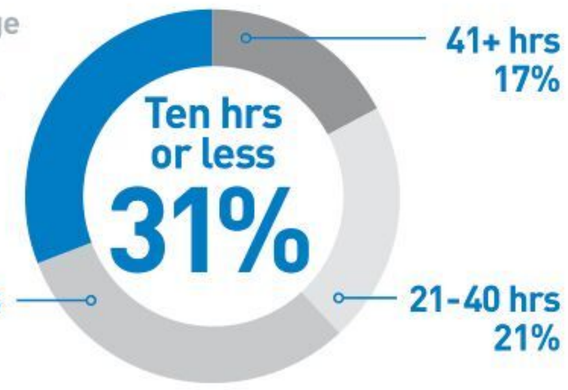
"THE CREATURE IS ALWAYS FAR CLOSER THAN YOU WOULD LIKE."

2,050

The rough number of hours it'd take you to play every game on the Top 100 list.

2019 is the most-represented year on the list, while 2005 and 1998 both came in strong for the '00s and the '90s. No game released in 1999 made the cut, though.

The average length of the games in the Top 100





JOURNEY

Helping hands in the sand

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2012
PUB SONY / **DEV** THATGAMECOMPANY, SANTA MONICA STUDIO

47 The image of a red-robed figure dashing between dunes is no doubt as burned into your memory as it is into Team PLAY's. But what is really magical about this tale told without words is gazing off across the sand and seeing another tiny red figure in the distance. Your communication with other players is limited to musical chirping as you guide each other through ruins in the desert towards the far-off finish line on the mountain beyond. A short and sweet experience playable in just a couple of hours, its collaborative multiplayer elevates it to all-timer status.



BIOSHOCK

Wet and wild

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2008
PUB 2K GAMES / **DEV** 2K BOSTON, 2K AUSTRALIA, 2K MARIN, DIGITAL EXTREMES

46 Rapture, an underwater city of art deco glamour, has met a soggy fate. The survivors are treading water in a place where if the super-powered splicers don't get you, the drill-wielding Big Daddies will. The superpower-granting Plasmids give you more than a snowball's chance plus an array of powers such as pyro and telekinesis. Remembered for its frequently imitated morality system and its dramatic final twist, take time to revisit this hugely influential FPS. Just one last thing: would you kindly save the Little Sisters?



PARAPPA THE RAPPER

A rap odyssey on paper

FORMAT PS4, PS1, PSP
RELEASED 1997 / **PUB** SONY
DEV EPICS, NANAON-SHA

45 Groundbreaking when it debuted, this early rhythm game is a short and sweet chapter in the genre's history. As 2D dog PaRappa you freestyle your way out of a series of increasingly cartoonish jams, from kitchen nightmares of varying flavours to the relatable fear of failing your driving test. You're tasked with repeating what your rapping partner is putting down but colouring outside those lines is also rewarded. Playful in presentation and mechanics, it's hard to say 'no' to this beanie-wearing dog. Check out the 2017 PS4 remaster – it's well worth the replay.



GHOST OF TSUSHIMA

Getting into the spirit

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2020
PUB SONY / **DEV** SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS

44 This game wears its influences on the sleeve of its kimono, to the point of introducing a black-and-white visual filter called Kurosawa mode. You play as samurai Jin Sakai, who journeys across the lushly realised open world island of Tsushima to push back the Mongol invasion, and can choose whether to take on your enemies head-on or deploy stealthier tactics from the shadows. An all-too-familiar structure is easily forgiven when you're left to soak in your beautiful surroundings and, thanks to a non-standard approach to waypointing, there's plenty to see.



NIER: AUTOMATA

Become as gods

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2017
PUB SQUARE ENIX
DEV PLATINUMGAMES

43 You had to play the first Nier game multiple times to get the full picture, and Automata took that idea and ran stylishly with it. As impeccably dressed battle android 2B you're tasked with repelling the other side of the robot war through hack-and-slash combat – most of the time. You'll also enjoy shoot-'em-up sequences, side-scrolling exploration, and even a dash of text-based adventure before you reach one of 26 endings. On top of a playful approach to genre, this is an action RPG with a lot on its mind and is best played going in knowing as little as possible.



WIPEOUT OMEGA COLLECTION

A joy from start to photo finish

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2017
PUB SONY / **DEV** XDEV, CLEVER BEANS, CREATIVE VAULT STUDIOS

42 What's better than one tummy-turning anti-gravity racer? Three of them. This collection brings together HD remasters of WipEout 2048, WipEout Pure, and WipEout Pulse plus a bunch of DLC. The collection introduces HDR support, and offers 60fps on the base PS4 and PS4 Pro (where you also get 4K resolution). On top of futuristic visuals, there's no beating this series' exhilarating sense of speed. Coupled with the 2018 VR patch, there are plenty of reasons to fall head over heels for WipEout.



DEAD SPACE

Gloriously gory

FORMAT PS3 / **RELEASED** 2008
PUB ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEV EA REDWOOD SHORES

41 Protagonist Isaac Clarke finds himself battling a ship full of mutated, reanimated corpses called necromorphs, possessing nothing but mining equipment with which to defend himself. Bloody brilliant action sees you lopping off enemy limbs with lasers, but an armless necromorph is far from *harmless* as they'll adjust their stance and adopt new tactics to take you out. Your isolation within the cold vacuum of space coupled with a stress-inducing soundtrack by Jason Graves makes for a nail-gnawing experience. A remake by Motive Studios is on the way.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

Climbing to the top of the pile

FORMAT PS5, PS4, PS3, PS2
RELEASED 2002 / **PUB** ROCKSTAR GAMES / **DEV** ROCKSTAR NORTH

40 Don your shoulder pads for this take on '80s decadence. As protagonist Tommy Vercetti, a drug deal gone wrong kickstarts your climb to the top of the criminal food chain. Your rampage sees you fighting the law as well as your criminal associates in an action-adventure borrowing liberally from the likes of Scarface and The Godfather. Unfortunately, 2021's The Definitive Edition remaster is far from an A-list experience, despite being the easiest way to visit Vice City on modern hardware.

DEATH STRANDING

Walk the line

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2019 / **PUB** SONY / **DEV** KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS

39

After Kojima's split from Konami, which meant leaving Metal Gear Solid behind, the question was whether the first project from his new studio would feel of a piece with his landmark espionage series or be completely different. While plenty here is familiar – the post-apocalypse storyline is just as bonkers as Metal Gear's world-ending conspiracies, and there are plenty of tense stealth moments – Death Stranding is very different.

Instead of the challenge in getting from A to B being to avoid enemy vision cones, Death Stranding makes it the geography itself. As futuristic delivery man Sam Bridges (Norman Reedus), figuring out how to navigate raging rivers, steep hills, and rocky outcrops is where mastery lies. You gradually come to respect the world around you, learning how to carry yourself around the unspoiled valleys and mountains peppered with survivor encampments and bunkers. (Most of civilisation was destroyed by a supernatural rain that melted everything away.)

"WHAT MAKES THE JOURNEY SPECIAL IS THE FACT IT'S SHARED."

GUARANTEED DELIVERY

There are more traditionally spooky encounters along the way, of course. Invisible enemies try to drag you to your death, the darkness illuminated only by a baby in a tank you carry on your chest (we said it was bonkers, didn't we?), and there's even a sequence where you have to shoot down a flying, inky-black whale.



While players don't interact directly, the shared world still instils the spirit of collaboration.

But they occupy a fraction of the overall playtime; your travelling is the meat of the game. Death Stranding really shines when you begin to make the harsh world your own territory, each delivery helping to familiarise you with the lay of the land between bases as you learn to instinctively prepare yourself – perhaps a riskier route is possible if you have a light enough load, or maybe you need to pack an extendable ladder or two to deal with some new cliff faces?

It all comes together as your individual experience begins to overlap with that of every other player. Kojima refers to this as a "strand" game; when playing online you're matched with other players and share structures built to aid traversal among yourselves, sometimes coming together to pool resources to build big bridges or ziplines. If this were just a lonely hiking game about making your own way, it'd be great – but what really makes Death Stranding's journey special is the fact it's shared. Whether it's the PS4-pushing original, or enhanced with bells and whistles on PS5, it's worth stepping out for.



WE LOVE KATAMARI

Keep on rollin'

FORMAT PS2 / **RELEASED** 2005 / **PUB** EA / **DEV** NAMCO



38 Not usually one for sequels, that Keita Takahashi returned for this followup is perhaps telling. The Prince Of All Cosmos' journey to roll terrestrial objects up into progressively bigger stars in the first game was wonderfully original, but We Love makes like the prince and rolls that up into an ever bigger and better package. There's more variety in what the Prince can roll up as you progress, and lots of additional objectives to give you reasons to go back and replay. Since We Love, each Katamari release has felt like it's spinning its wheels (or should that be balls?).



ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY

Busting up big myths

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2018
PUB UBISOFT / **DEV** UBISOFT QUEBEC

37 How do you make a great Assassin's Creed without Assassins? Nor their Templar rivals, for that matter? By making it a massive RPG that riffs off Greek epics. With a main quest feeling more like suggestions to nudge you around the Greek islands, as Kassandra or Alexios you stumble upon adventures that feel like your own, from dealing with fake Minotaurs to tackling real-life mythical beasties. Aside from repetitive-feeling camps, the only times it falls down are when the devs clearly felt obliged to tie it into the wider series lore.



FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE

A return to seventh heaven

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2020
PUB SQUARE ENIX / **DEV** SQUARE ENIX

36 The most fun we've had with a Final Fantasy in years was with one based on a classic. But this retelling of the PS1 JRPG is heaped with material as fresh as an Aerith-plucked daisy. Only covering the Midgar portion of the original, it diverts from that game in exciting ways. Midgar is gorgeous (for a steampunk-adjacent industrial hellhole) and FF has finally cracked real-time combat, the mix of tactical pauses with hack-and-slash action perhaps the best fighting system the series has ever seen. Plus, we just love Aerith.



RESIDENT EVIL 4

Drop dead Leon Kennedy

FORMAT PS4, PS3, PS2
RELEASED 2005 / **PUB** CAPCOM
DEV CAPCOM

35 We liked Leon Kennedy in Resident Evil 2. But we *love* him in Resident Evil 4. The games and their spin-offs had become increasingly formulaic, and Resi 4 shook the series up with terrifying results. The setting is rural, but the pace is far from tractor-slow as the Las Plagas-infected villagers are fast, dangerous threats. Leon is up for the challenge though; with quick kicks and a quicker trigger finger, his constant action movie quips provide much-needed reprieves from the horror. None of its successors have balanced action with survival horror as well.



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

Birth of a modern classic

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2007
PUB ACTIVISION / **DEV** INFINITY WARD

34 This sequel was so good it started its own series, and its shadow looms over every COD to this day. Even the recent reboot is getting a sequel. But it's all for good reason. Ditching historical warfare – the series' mainstay before it – Modern Warfare pumped its near-future anti-nuclear weapons tale full of adrenaline. Move over Ubisoft, this is how you make a game with Tom Clancy vibes. Captain Price remains COD's most iconic character, and some missions are FPS standouts to this day, like All Ghillied Up's stealthy sniper assassination.

TEAM PICKS

RACHEL WATTS
STAFF WRITER

KENTUCKY ROUTE ZERO



I'm sad that Cardboard Computer's weird point-and-click adventure had to be cut, but I understand that a magical-realist story about the search for a highway that may or may not exist isn't for everyone. Kentucky Route Zero is dreamlike in its atmosphere but the truths it tells of hardship in the economic backwaters of the US hit hard. These tales are told through working-class folk you meet during your journey and are conjured with artful imagery and evocative storytelling. In Kentucky Route Zero, truth, myth, and the supernatural tangle together in one fantastical road trip adventure that will stay with you.

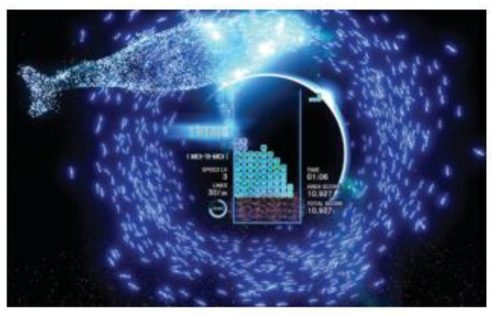


CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

Sins of the father

FORMAT PS4, PS1 / **RELEASED** 1997
PUB KONAMI / **DEV** KONAMI

33 Perhaps the best metroidvania we've played (and one of the games that defined the genre), it also has the unfortunate side-effect of ruining the others by comparison. From gorgeous pixel art to the way protagonist Alucard handles as you run through the tightly designed maps, everything feels masterfully done. It's all the more mind-blowing when the second half of the game *flips the castle on its turrets*, revealing it was designed to be just as enjoyable played upside-down. What game does that? Symphony does, and it's the genre high bar.



TETRIS EFFECT

Make Tetris, not war

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2018
PUB ENHANCE GAMES
DEV MONSTARS, RESONAIR, STAGE GAMES

32 How do you improve on a perfect game? The core of Tetris itself doesn't need changing, and Enhance Games knew this. Tetris Effect, then, is all about the vibes. The challenge to position the pieces into lines that then disappear is accompanied by spectacular effects and flowing vistas that react to your inputs. On a TV it's amazing, but in PSVR you're plugged into the world of falling tetrominos in a way that feels transcendent. What other puzzle game can have us tearing up, feeling closer to the experience we call 'life' than ever before?



THE RATCHET & CLANK TRILOGY: CLASSICS HD

A fab trio from a great duo

FORMAT PS3, PSV / **RELEASED** 2012
PUB SONY / **DEV** INSOMNIAC GAMES, IDOL MINDS, MASS MEDIA

31 As much as we adored PS5's Rift Apart, the PS2 trilogy of Ratchet & Clank games is king – and all three were given a bit of TLC on PS3. The comedy has more bite than later entries, and both Ratchet and Clank feel like independent characters rather than a single unit. Capping it all off is the sheer destruction, each weapon bigger and more bombastic than anything else we'd seen on PS2, be it cluster bombs exploding into ever-tinier bombs or a ray that turns enemies into clucking chickens.

"STILL THE BEST TIME WE'VE HAD WITH THE SERIES TO DATE."

ASSASSIN'S CREED II

Under the hood

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2009 / **PUB** UBISOFT / **DEV** UBISOFT MONTRÉAL

30

There was always the chance Assassin's Creed could have been a blip on the radar rather than the behemoth it is today. Ezio Auditore da Firenze is what saved it.

The charming Italian has no knowledge of the Assassins or Templars when we meet him as a carefree 17-year-old. Then, in a Batman-like tragedy, he loses most of his family and discovers his father's secret life as a cloaked agent of justice. Picking up the paternal mantle, as Ezio you move around Italy from city to city, running the red rooftops of Florence and leaping across Venetian canals on a path of revenge. Everything is slicker than in the preceding game, from more fluid parkour to increased stealth options – but it's Ezio's journey that's unforgettable, his entire trilogy still the best time we've had with the series to date.



BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

Tighter than '60s Bat-pants

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2009
PUB WARNER BROS INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEV ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS

29 Inspired by the '90s animated series and giving things a gritty twist, Arkham Asylum sees Batman stopping The Joker taking over the hospital. Metroidvania-like exploration means each gadget you gain opens up new wings to explore, ruled over by supervillains like Poison Ivy and Scarecrow. Every element sells the Batman fantasy, from Predator rooms where you pick goons off one by one to the rhythmic combat that has you systematically brutalising enemies.



TOMB RAIDER II

Belongs in a museum

FORMAT PS1 / **RELEASED** 1997
PUB EIDOS INTERACTIVE
DEV CORE DESIGN

28 Some players might baulk at the picky platforming that forces you to carefully line up jumps, but if you're prepared to meet Tomb Raider II on its own terms, the clambering in Lara's second outing is better than in a lot of modern attempts. Exploring is a rewarding challenge, something to complement the gunplay rather than merely break it up. This sequel hits the right spot with its mix of levels, feeling more ambitious than its predecessor, taking you everywhere from Venice to spooky Chinese temples. And who can forget trapping loyal butler Winston in the fridge?



GRAN TURISMO 7

Gassed up and ready to roll

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2022
PUB SONY / **DEV** POLYPHONY DIGITAL

27 Sure, we've praised the classics, but the PS5 entry in this series doesn't let off the accelerator. The cars are ridiculously pretty, and the feeling of being behind the dashboard is better than ever thanks to the DualSense – haptics mean you can feel how close to the edge of the tarmac your wheels are spinning, and when you brake the adaptive triggers push back at you. Iffy microtransactions aside, it's a chill experience, with a lovingly curated motoring museum, a quiet café, and racers who will stop to chat about the flowers surrounding a track before you assemble on the line. Pure motoring joy.



HORIZON ZERO DAWN

From the brink of extinction

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2017
PUB SONY / **DEV** GUERRILLA GAMES

26 Aloy's debut adventure is unforgettable and, technical improvements aside, a stronger showing than its PS5 followup. Post-apocalyptic landscapes aren't new to games, but this one is unique, with robotic versions of dinosaurs running amok and various cultures which have interpreted the remains of the old world their own way. Discovering what happened to life as we know it forms the bulk of Aloy's journey. It's just good science fiction. Camp-clearing side-missions might be so-so, but the fights, where you must use the right weapons to tear off specific pieces of armour, are fantastic.

YAKUZA 0

Party like it's 1989

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2015 / **PUB** SEGA / **DEV** RYU GA GOTOKU STUDIO



25 The earliest in the Yakuza timeline (it's a prequel), this '80s-set jaunt breathed fresh life into the series, and is a perfect entry point. It's split between two protagonists, series regular Kazuma Kiryu and (playable for the first time) Goro Majima; their stories weave together despite the characters never meeting, with what starts out as a conspiracy around a plot of land spiralling out into a nationwide power struggle. The brawling is superb, with massive variety between the two leads. And, thanks to Japan's booming economy, money spills out of each crunched skull.

TEAM PICKS

MIRIAM MCDONALD
CONTRIBUTOR

DRAGON QUEST BUILDERS 2



There's something deeply satisfying about whacking things – trees, rocks, monsters – with a ruddy great hammer. It's even better when your violence is rewarded with materials you can use to build homes for people and weapons to take on the monsters threatening a series of charming worlds. DQB2's not perfect. For one thing, it includes possibly the most ill-conceived stealth level in the entire history of videogames. Yet the charming characters, including your sinister BFF Malroth, cute monsters with the puntastic names, and the free build island where you can construct whatever you choose, are captivating.



ELDEN RING

Breaking the cycle

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2022
PUB BANDAI NAMCO
DEV FROMSOFTWARE

24 More than just 'Dark Souls but open world', this successfully reinvents the viciously spiked wheel as a fantasy adventure that's as tough as ever, but one you can approach your own way. With a map that constantly reveals itself to be larger and more intricate than you'd expect, much of it is free to explore in any order, with big 'legacy dungeons' punctuated by smaller, more bite-sized ones where you can upgrade your gear and collect new skills. It'll go down as a turning point in the soulslike genre, even if the ambitious new approach leads to the odd pitfall.



GRAND THEFT AUTO V

Feeling at home in Los Santos

FORMAT PS5, PS4, PS3
RELEASED 2013 / **PUB** ROCKSTAR GAMES / **DEV** ROCKSTAR NORTH

23 Straddling three console generations, there's good reason why the latest GTA has stayed hot. Los Santos is a sandbox city rendered in detail like no other, and the way you play as three characters (sometimes swapping personality mid-mission) breathes fresh life into your crime sprees, emphasising roleplay more than ever. The big set-piece missions, such as heists, are some of GTA's most bombastic, and the performances throughout are always engaging. It might not have the teeth of its more recent cousin, Red Dead Redemption 2, but it's still one of our most wanted.



DEATHLOOP

Back at it again

FORMAT PS5 / **RELEASED** 2021
PUB BETHESDA SOFTWORKS
DEV ARKANE STUDIOS

22 Given it tops our PS5 Hall Of Fame, you might wonder why Arkane's new-gen revitalisation of the immersive sim as a thrill-ride, repeatable FPS doesn't even grace the Top 20 here. Well, it takes a while for a recent release to cement itself as an all-time classic. It's distinct from the same studio's Dishonored series, and we couldn't help placing one of those titles higher. Still, there's no doubt that Colt's mission to comb over Blackreef Island one timeloop at a time to assassinate all his targets in one day is a corker, especially in how it fully uses PS5's power.

DARK SOULS

You will rise to the challenge – repeatedly

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2011
PUB BANDAI NAMCO / **DEV** FROMSOFTWARE

21

Thanks to tightened-up bosses and an intricately designed world, Dark Souls slew predecessor Demon's Souls (though that game is rather pretty on PS5), transforming FromSoftware into the behemoth it is today.

The direction you take through the twisty, turny, interconnected areas is mostly up to you, often sheer difficulty the only roadblock – which can always be overcome by skill thanks to fair wind-ups and encounter design. It might seem hard, but it's a game

"THE BIGGEST IMPROVEMENTS ARE TO YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO PLAY."

where the biggest improvements aren't to your character's stats but to your understanding of how to play. Add on the great variety in locations, and the result is a compelling curve of progression – an empowering journey very much your own – that few games, not even its own direct sequels, can compete with.

DISHONORED 2

Having a masquerade ball

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2016 / **PUB** BETHESDA SOFTWORKS / **DEV** ARKANE STUDIOS

20

Some games struggle with power curves, being wary of making you feel overpowered too early. Dishonored 2, however, isn't afraid to shower you in godlike powers from the off – and it then throws you into situations that constantly push you to use your suite of unusual skills in different ways, often leaving the 'how' of the approach up to you.

The exact powers on offer depend on who you choose to play the game as. The first game's protagonist, Corvo, returns with a set of powers similar to the ones he wielded there, including the abilities to teleport and summon rats, whereas his daughter Emily, Empress Of Dunwall, is able to fling herself into the air, hypnotise enemies, and spiritually connect them to set off chain reactions.

Highlights include levels designed like devious puzzle boxes unto themselves. Both The Clockwork Mansion, where you sneak between the walls of an ever-shifting grand house, and A Crack In The Slab, which has you shifting between time periods in a single location, all with different guards and hazards, could easily merit a place on this list on their own. As enjoyable as Arkane's next release, Deathloop, is, you need to replay these tightly designed levels to suss them out completely just because they're such well-crafted spaces, rather than being forced to via a gameplay conceit.

"HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE LEVELS DESIGNED LIKE DEVIOUS PUZZLE BOXES."

DUSTING OFF

Despite your otherworldly powers, the journey to save your kingdom is far from a walk in the park. Instead, you're up against dusty winds – literally. The city of Karnaca, where most of the game takes place, is dusty and dangerous, infested with bloodflies, its people repressed by state-of-the-art security. No matter how you approach situations, each level has plenty to put you through your paces, from ruined residential districts to a museum overrun by witches who have powers to match your own.

PLAYSTATION TOP 100





DREAMS

Get your head in the game

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2020
PUB SONY / **DEV** MEDIA MOLECULE

19 Media Molecule has worked its magic again, graduating from LittleBigPlanet's level editors to a full-on game maker. Beyond the suite of tools that offers an impressive amount of depth, Dreams' active community and their creations are reason enough to take a peek. It's easy to lose many hours to Dream Surfing alone (just as we did as recently as PLAY #14) and Media Molecule's own musical adventure, Art's Dream, is made with the same tools. It's well worth experiencing – after all, it can't be just us getting all misty-eyed at the ending cover of Time Moves Slow.



MASS EFFECT LEGENDARY EDITION

Across the universe

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2021
PUB ELECTRONIC ARTS / **DEV** BIOWARE

18 Commander Shepard treks across the stars to bring people together in the face of a galactic threat: the Reapers. As the series tells a complete story, we couldn't bear to spotlight only one chapter. While a largely faithful remaster, this three-game bundle introduces a number of quality-of-life improvements. For a start, the Mako feels like it really was built for all terrain, offering a smoother ride. Combat has also been rebalanced and those infamously lengthy elevator rides have been shortened. Justifiably legendary.



LIFE IS STRANGE

Teenage angst to the Max

FORMAT PS4, PS3 / **RELEASED** 2015
PUB SQUARE ENIX
DEV DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT

17 Young Max Caulfield's artistic eye got her into the prestigious Blackwell Academy but a chance encounter with her childhood friend Chloe Price leaves her feeling conflicted about the past and their future. This teen drama makes the most of its supernatural time travel twist to deliver at least one gut-punch in each of its five episodes – to say nothing of its two possible endings. Ashly Burch's performance as your blue-haired bestie remains iconic and sells the humanity of the abrasive, troubled teen. Is the first game our favourite in the series? Hella!



HITMAN 3

Getting to the point

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2021
PUB IO INTERACTIVE
DEV IO INTERACTIVE

16 Considering the World Of Assassination trilogy's concluding chapter only grants access to the maps of the earlier entries if you already own them and offers no multiplayer modes of its own, this is a cheeky pick. However, the six new stages serve only to remind us why we've been so obsessed with this series' murdery puzzle boxes for the last few years. From a Knives Out-style stage set in Dartmoor to a messy night out in Berlin, it's the perfect capstone to Agent 47's return. The Dubai level is particularly breathtaking, but playing the whole thing in PSVR – now *that's* magical.

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SUBSISTENCE

What a thrill

FORMAT PS3, PS2 / **RELEASED** 2006 / **PUB** KONAMI / **DEV** KONAMI



15 From the James Bond-y theme song sung by Cynthia Harrell to the hand-to-hand combat system, the third MGS had a ton of style. This expanded rerelease adds much more besides, including a *solid* online multiplayer mode for the time. The forest where much of the game takes place sees you snacking on reptiles and getting to grips with expanded stealth mechanics. Beyond camouflage, cover and how much noise you made play a more mechanically sophisticated role than in previous games. All that's left to be said is 'sing along if you know the words.'

TEAM PICKS

OSCAR TAYLOR-KENT
CONTRIBUTOR

BUGS BUNNY: LOST IN TIME



There are some seminal RPGs that were a bit too niche to make such a hotly contested list, like Shin Megami Tensei III and Vagrant Story. But the tie-ins were the ones I was saddest to lose. In most cases, the fact they failed to make the Top 100 is reasonable, but for many players they defined early gens. While The Simpsons: Hit & Run and Spider-Man 2 came awfully close to making it, deeper cuts like Toy Story 2 and Bugs Bunny: Lost In Time stood no chance. The latter time-hopping adventure remains underrated once again. Nostalgia plays an important role in crafting lists like this, but in the end that can only get you *so* far.



MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN: MILES MORALES

Best for Miles

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2020 / **PUB** SONY
DEV INSOMNIAC GAMES

14 Peter Parker goes away on a well-earned holiday, leaving superhero-in-training Miles Morales to keep an eye on New York and usher the series onto current-gen consoles. While both webheads handle similarly, Miles has a few more tricks up the sleeve of his spider-suit, including the power to stun enemies with bio-electricity (which you can feel through the DualSense) and the ability to turn invisible. Overall this adventure's smaller in scope than Peter's outing but it feels no less complete. The PS5 release came wrapped up with a remaster of 2018's Marvel's Spider-Man, making it an absolute must-buy.



CONTROL

Fling while you're winning

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2019 / **PUB** 505 GAMES
DEV REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT

13 Building on all that it had created before, Remedy returned with a new-weird-infused shooter. In it, protagonist Jesse Faden goes looking for answers in the Oldest House, the brutalist-styled seat of power of the Federal Bureau Of Control. What she finds is a shapeshifting gun, a suite of telekinetic powers, and a job. As the new head of the bureau Jesse discovers the rabbit hole only gets deeper, and she winds up fighting against an interdimensional invasion. Boasting stylish action backed up by impactful sound design, this is an offbeat third-person shooter worth getting lost in. The 2021 PS5 rerelease is a sight to behold and makes the most of the current gen's ray-tracing capabilities.

RESIDENT EVIL 2

Take us down to Raccoon City

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2019 / **PUB** CAPCOM / **DEV** CAPCOM

12

Picking the remake over the original might be controversial, but we can't overstate just how transformative this remake is. Everything you expect to see is present and correct: Mr X, scenario double trouble, and even Tofu survivor – but they've been wholly reimagined to make the most of cutting-edge tech.

Gone are the fixed camera angles, and in their place is a claustrophobic over-the-shoulder perspective that gives you only the thin beam of your flashlight for comfort. Instead of lurking enemies being artfully hidden just beyond a camera cut, redesigned environments ramp up the tension through an array of atmospheric touches only possible on hardware made this side of the millennium. The RE engine really is the MVP though, rendering both survivors and zombies alike in a terrifying amount of detail.

"ONLY THE THIN BEAM OF YOUR FLASHLIGHT FOR COMFORT."



PERSONA 5 ROYAL

A heart-stealing classic

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2020
PUB SEGA / **DEV** P-STUDIO, ATLUS

11 Everything new in this expanded rerelease raises the question 'Do you want to live in a world of shadows? Or do you want to unmask it?' To say more would be a massive spoiler, but what *is* safe to say is that Royal takes an already incredibly stylish 100-plus-hour JRPG and makes it even bigger. With the introduction of another potential Phantom Thief, fresh story elements are woven throughout the game you know and love. Alongside more Personas, there's an all-new bespoke Palace to explore, and a whole third term to spend strengthening the bonds between you and your buds.



DISCO ELYSIUM: THE FINAL CUT

Playing mind games

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2021
PUB ZA/UM / **DEV** ZA/UM

10 Few games see you having a heart attack because you gave the finger just a little too hard, but blackly comedic moments like that punctuate this murder mystery. Matters are complicated by the fact that you, the lead investigator, have lost your memory after an all-night bender. As you hunt a killer, you're also chasing the ghost of who you were. In addition to your partner, the unflappable Kim Kitsurugi, a confrontational chorus of thoughts accompanies you on the case. Fantastic writing makes this an investigation like no other.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

Ride 'til you can't no more

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2018
PUB ROCKSTAR GAMES
DEV ROCKSTAR STUDIOS

09 Whereas GTA III rocked our worlds by defining the modern open-world sandbox, Red Dead Redemption 2 sought to do it by evolving Rockstar's acclaimed cowboy epic. And it was successful. The massive map delights not just with its size, but its detail, from the way Arthur Morgan pulls up veggies by the roots to how fog dances in the light from gas lamps and horse testicles sway (really). Morgan's tragic outlaw tale is one of gaming's best, but thanks to the way side-events constantly unfurl as you travel, no two players will have quite the same experience.



METAL GEAR SOLID

Still like a rock

FORMAT PS1 / **RELEASED** 1998
PUB KONAMI / **DEV** KONAMI

08 We often find ourselves flashing back to Kojima's PS1 debut in helicopters, like Old Snake. Instead of being haunted by the past, however, we're enamoured by it. Solid Snake's infiltration of the island of Shadow Moses was a well-told spy thriller for the time, and is still better than some modern titles. Some moments play with the medium in ways that impress to this day, from Psycho Mantis taking control of your TV and console to tracking down Meryl, all wrapped up in great, arcadey 'avoid the vision cones' stealth. Beloved for a reason, it's a genuine must-play even now.

GOD OF WAR

Reinventing the, um, axe?

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2018 / **PUB** SONY / **DEV** SANTA MONICA STUDIO

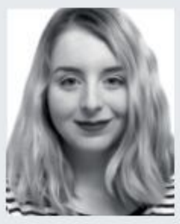
07 PlayStation's angriest leading man faces a tonal reckoning as he confronts his greatest challenge yet: fatherhood. Joking aside, this soft reboot sees Kratos swapping Greece and its pantheon (which he's whittled down significantly) for the chillier climes of Midgard with young son Atreus in tow. This father-son dynamic isn't just a key narrative thread, it snakes through the third-person combat with Norse gods and monsters too. The ambitious one-shot-style camera is occasionally clumsy, but the addition of Atreus as a foil for dear old Dad makes this a truly standout chapter.



TEAM PICKS

JESS KINGHORN
CONTRIBUTOR

CHICORY: A COLORFUL TALE



You may be expecting me to mention Shadow Hearts or Koudelka here but one thing I love about those gothic horror JRPGs is that they're far from Top 100 material. So, speaking of getting messy, I'd like instead to spotlight a heartfelt adventure that made too much of a splash not to get a mention. Chicory: A Colorful Tale takes place in the colouring book locale of Luncheon, where you're tasked with reintroducing colour between the lines and beyond by scribbling directly on your controller's trackpad. At the same time, your protagonist grapples with their own creative journey in a way that hit me like it knew where I lived.



SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

They might be giants

FORMAT PS4, PS3, PS2 / **RELEASED** 2005 / **PUB** SONY
DEV BLUEPOINT GAMES, JAPAN STUDIO, TEAM ICO

06 Following on from Ico's castle of shadows, this spiritual successor sets out to deliver another emotionally devastating blow. Bluepoint's remake of the 2006 PS2 classic remains true to the original's emotional arc even though every asset has been rebuilt from the ground up. As Wander, you consort with the entity Dormin in a bid to resurrect Mono, a cursed maiden. Naturally, the price is steep. You're tasked with hunting down 16 massive beasts in the atmospheric Forbidden Land. Fights against these colossi see you clinging on for dear life before sticking 'em with the pointy end. The fall of a Colossus is a sombre moment, and with each kill Wander becomes less like the version of himself Mono once knew.



FINAL FANTASY XII

Telling a different story

FORMAT PS4, PS2 / **RELEASED** 2007 / **PUB** SQUARE ENIX
DEV SQUARE ENIX

05 Not just notable for returning to the iconic setting of Ivalice, this ambitious JRPG is also remembered for how much it switched up, and that innovation echoes throughout the series to this day. Random encounters are out, replaced by always-on-screen enemies who'll give chase if you draw their attention. The Gambit system supports your party through these more dynamic encounters, allowing you to finetune the AI of your travelling companions. Party members can then use experience to learn almost any skill thanks to the License Board. Gorgeous on original hardware, 2017's The Zodiac Age remaster brings Ivalice into high definition. This PS4 rerelease is the best way to revisit a classic.

THE LAST OF US PART II

A gut-wrenching sequel

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2020
PUB SONY / **DEV** NAUGHTY DOG

04

Eyebrows were raised when Naughty Dog announced it was making a sequel to The Last Of Us, a game that arguably needed no followup, but the result was a brutal yet beautiful post-apocalyptic story that will leave your emotions feeling as battered and bruised as its cast. Team PLAY had a tough decision when choosing between The Last Of Us Part I or Part II for this coveted spot, but there's a thematic maturity in Naughty Dog's sequel that broke the standoff.

The Last of Us Part II feels like a game that's constantly wrestling with itself. Its story of revenge and an eye-for-an-eye mentality leads to savage action and ruthless combat, two features often celebrated in games. But this thematic cycle of violence and death is destructive to its characters. These forces are at odds with another theme, of survival, and you are forced to confront them all head-on.

LOST AND FOUND

Post-pandemic America is a cruel place, but we're given brief glimpses of humanity. Flashbacks show happier times with protagonists Ellie and Joel doing things like exploring a museum and playing the guitar together – a continuation of their relationship from the first game. They serve as moments of brief tranquility for the player but also emotional collateral that drives the bloodshed when you get forced back to the present.

The developers are skilled at making you empathise with the characters. The line between 'good guys' and 'bad guys' blurs as Ellie, hell-bent on vengeance, commits increasingly violent acts. The anger and hunger for justice characters feel are legitimate, but how far are their actions justified? This question is at the core of Part II and the result is a profound revenge tale with heart-wrenching moments and emotional gut punches. The Last Of Us Part II will leave you feeling exhausted by the time those credits roll. Thanks, Naughty Dog.

"A PROFOUND REVENGE TALE WITH HEART-WRENCHING MOMENTS."

THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

Worth tracking down

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2015 / **PUB** CD PROJEKT / **DEV** CD PROJEKT RED

03

The previous two Witchers never came to PlayStation, but no matter: this game starring everyone's favourite grumpy monster hunter is all you need. The fantasy world is a marvel to behold, settings from war-torn Velen to the wild Skellige islands distinctive and believable, and it's home to everything you could ever want from a story-driven RPG, including action, drama, and plenty of monster-bashing.

Alongside a compelling storyline – Geralt's looking for his adopted daughter, Ciri, who's also being pursued by the spectral Wild Hunt – are masses of side-quests and surprise encounters that can unwind into hours-long stories. You won't find any tedious filler missions here. What's more, the choices you make throughout the story actually feel like they have world-changing consequences, which is quite the feat. When you're not plunging your sword into the hearts of dragons or getting pulled into rowdy pub brawls, you can take a quiet moment and just relax into the world, just you and your horse on the open road. An unforgettable adventure.

"EVERYTHING YOU COULD EVER WANT FROM AN RPG."

SERIES OF UNFORTUNATES

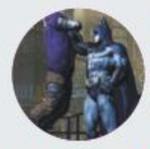
The series entries that caused the hottest debate

UNCHARTED 2



It's a PlayStation great, and better than the rest of the PS3 trilogy, but Uncharted 4 got into the Top 100 thanks to how the improved stealth and grapple hook improved combat. Still, Uncharted 2 is a joyous must-play. Nate's all over the place, from Tibetan temples to war-torn Nepal, with fab set-pieces throughout.

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY



Like Two-Face tossing a coin, whether we prefer Arkham Asylum or Arkham City changes day to day. You could argue that City's open world gives a sense of freedom as you zigzag between baddie lairs. You could also say that those lairs feel more trivial than the labyrinthine asylum. Heads or tails, though, we always win.

METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN



The stealth mechanics here are some of the best around, combined with open world design that offers plenty of playgrounds for having fun with your tools. The problem? There's too much repetition, and it was released in a clearly unfinished state. We yearn for what could have been.

TEAM PICKS

MILFORD COPPOCK
CONTRIBUTOR

TOWERFALL ASCENSION



Usually I'm a single-player kind of guy, and the vast majority of games on our Top 100 are just that. Huge, serious single-player experiences. But where are the fun multiplayer games like Towerfall Ascension? I've lost track of the number of lunch hours I've spent over the years cursing team members over an expertly (or more likely, *luckily*) aimed arrow in Towerfall's single-screen shooter! Great fun!

02

UNCHARTED 4: A THIEF'S END

Back on the map

FORMAT PS5, PS4 / **RELEASED** 2016 / **PUB** SONY / **DEV** NAUGHTY DOG

Naughty Dog's move away from the cartoony worlds of Crash Bandicoot and Jak & Daxter had us salivating for its games on PS3 back in the day. We hungered for the Uncharted series' only full-size entry on PS4 in the same way. And while the PS5 remaster is certainly a looker, the original release can still make your jaw drop, whether it's at the fidelity of walking through a busy market before climbing up a clock tower that creaks enough to make your bumcheeks clench with each jump or the blues of the sea as you search a group of islands for clues. (The latter's one of two huge maps that hammer home exploration.)

Nathan Drake's final adventure has a more mature tone than the preceding games, questioning whether a treasure hunter can ever leave the thrill of the chase behind and settle down. But it strikes a great balance, with plenty of chuckles and seat-of-your-pants set-pieces to offset the serious aspects. The plot may meander at times, but it successfully adds a new backstory about Nate's long-lost brother Sam, and sets up two of the series' best antagonists – rival treasure hunter Nadine Ross and rich boy Rafe Adler.

> "PLENTY OF CHUCKLES TO OFFSET THE SERIOUS ASPECTS."

ROPED IN

Though the series was four entries deep, Uncharted 4 has plenty to set it apart beyond great visuals and a rollicking story. Mechanically, this is the series' peak, thanks to smarter AI and a grappling hook. The hook adds a new layer to Nate's clambering, and comes into its own in combat, many arenas having plenty of points where you can use it to quickly change your elevation or zip around corners. Combine it with the improved AI and you have some compelling opportunities for guerrilla warfare, as you're able to deal with individual enemies without alerting the pack and can slip back into stealth after being spotted, the hook allowing you to be always in control of your approach, whether that's through tall grass or from the rafters on high.

What makes it even better? The enhanced version on PS5 comes bundled with The Lost Legacy, a sequel that, while smaller in scope, proves Uncharted's future is still bright.

BLOODBORNE

This old blood is as good as new

FORMAT PS4 / **RELEASED** 2015 / **PUB** SONY / **DEV** FROMSOFTWARE

01

Oozing as much atmosphere as it does blood, FromSoftware's gothic PS4 exclusive remains a masterpiece. While very much in step with predecessors Demon's Souls and Dark Souls, much of what makes Bloodborne so intoxicating is in how it's *not* like those games. In fact, it's not like anything else at all.

Sure, you've got massive bosses and dangerous maze-like areas to navigate, but this is also a game that practically forbids you from using a shield. Limited-time health restoration plus a gun you dual-wield with your weapon of choice encourage you always to duck and weave your way back into the fray.

While not the legions of differently-named fantasy swords from Souls, each 'trick weapon' your Hunter can master has a unique playstyle, whether it's a sword-cane that turns with a flick of the wrist into a bladed whip or a big sword that you insert into a block of granite to transform into a chunky hammer. And, thanks to FromSoftware's usual summon system, it's all the better with friends by your side.

CITY SLICKER

Yharnam, where you're trapped in an unending nightmare, has been infected by strange blood. Men have turned into beasts, and those who remain are on a hunt to purge the things that go bump in the night – yourself included. Every corner of this world is crafted to feel illicit and dangerous, and often the only way to get through is to master your own fear, to stop hanging back cautiously, and to get stuck in. As you progress, Bloodborne responds by throwing even weirder, grosser enemies at you in a twisty plot revealing ever stranger things (it all gets very cosmic horror).

The city is a location like no other, with cathedrals built on cathedrals, but there's a real sense of place as you move from one district to another, poking around to find unpleasant secrets. Even the odd further-flung location, like snow-blanketed Cainhurst Castle and a literal Nightmare wrought physical, all tie back to the city's bloody secrets. Rarely does a game feel this focused, and never so joyful to overcome. ■

This world is always out to get you, and it's rarely a fair fight. But that won't stop us from having a bloody good time anyway.

"OFTEN THE ONLY WAY TO GET THROUGH IS TO MASTER YOUR OWN FEAR AND GET STUCK IN."

READER OFFER

SUBSCRIBE NOW TO PLAY AUSTRALIA & SAVE

→ Subscribe today and you'll receive 12 issues of Australia's best-selling PLAY Australia magazine delivered direct to your door for only $99.

→ Never miss another issue, and save $80 on the newsstand price!



SUBSCRIBE TO PLAY TODAY

FOR JUST $99 FOR 12 ISSUES

techmags.com.au or call (02) 8227 6486

TERMS & CONDITIONS While stocks last. Your subscription includes GST and postage, and will start from the next available issue, and only once payment has been received. All subscription offers are subject to availability. Privacy - the subscription offer, and competitions and offers included in this issue may require you to provide information about yourself if you choose to enter, take part, or subscribe. If you provide information about yourself to Future Publishing, we will use this information to provide you with the products or services you have requested, and we will supply your information to contractors to enable Future Publishing to fulfil this obligation. Unless you write to tell us not to, Future Publishing will also use your information to inform you of other Future Publishing publications, products, services and events. Future Publishing may also give your information to organisations that are providing special prizes, offers or events. If you would like to gain access to the information Future Publishing holds about you, please write to the Managing Director, Future Australia, PO Box Q1179 Queen Victoria Building NSW 1230

Reviews

70 Lego Builder's Journey

If you build it, they will... cross



HIGHLIGHTS

TREK TO YOMI 64 | TINY TINA'S WONDERLANDS 68 | WEIRD WEST 69 | MOTOGP 22 72 | LEGO STAR WARS: THE SKYWALKER SAGA 74 | MOSS 2 78 | STRANGE OF PARADISE: FINAL FANTASY ORIGIN 80 | SLIPSTREAM 81 ROAD 96 81 | CATHEDRAL 81



Trek To Yomi

A stunning homage whose blade needs some sharpening



INFO

FORMAT PS5 (reviewed), PS4

ETA Out now

PUB Devolver Digital

DEV Leonard Menchiari, Wild Flying Hog

PLAYERS 1

LENGTH 5-6 hrs

ACCESSIBILITY Difficulty options; bloom and grain filters on/off; subtitles

Wait, a samurai game inspired by the black-and-white samurai films of Japanese director Akira Kurosawa except with Tarantino-esque levels of ultraviolence? Haven't we had one of those already? You may be thinking of Ghost Of Tsushima, which includes a 'Kurosawa mode' that allows you to play Sucker Punch's open-world epic in monochrome with grainy film filters and Japanese audio.

But whereas that game included it as a somewhat superficial option, Trek To Yomi fully commits to the aesthetic. It's still a samurai game from a Western perspective, in this case that of developer Leonard Menchiari and Polish studio Wild Flying Hog (the latter no stranger to dabbling in Asian tales, having worked on the Shadow Warrior series) but having a Japanese voice cast and a soundtrack using instruments exclusive to its Edo-period setting shows an admirable effort to create as authentic an homage as possible.

The story of Hiroki, seen first as a boy apprentice, then grown up into a samurai and capable killer tasked with defending his village from the threat of bandits and murderous warlords, may not be up there with Seven Samurai, and it lacks Kurosawa's humour, but it's nonetheless more than a simple revenge yarn. The writing mirrors the Japanese creation myth of Izanagi and Izanami, including a journey that takes our hero into the Japanese underworld, Yomi itself.

2D OR NOT 2D

Though it's a fairly straightforward 2D action game in which the goal is to kill or be killed, Trek To Yomi's presentation has a grand sense of scale, its fixed camera occasionally pulling back as the surrounding environments dwarf you like in cinematic platformers (Menchiari was also the


An admirable effort to create as authentic an homage as possible.
切



1
2



3



1 The movie-mimicking composition and lighting make every scene mesmerising, despite being often very grim and desolate. 2 The opening chapter offers a glimpse of Edo-period village life, until all hell breaks loose. 3 You unlock a few ranged weapons to use alongside your blade, but then so do your enemies.

creator of excellent 2-bit homage The Eternal Castle Remastered).

There's a great sense of depth in the level design, with environments stretching into both the background and foreground, expanding beyond the ruins of a village to the farmland, forest, and waterfalls around it, everything carefully framed to fit the letterboxing in order to stay faithful to the 2.35:1 aspect ratio of super-widescreen cinema. You aren't just moving from left to right or vice versa either, as many areas allow you to explore a few other optional routes in 3D.

In combat, the action snaps back to its two-dimensional plane so you only have to worry about enemies in front of or behind you. They can't attack you (and vice versa) until they have moved out of the background or foreground, which saves you from nasty surprises. Indeed, these bandits aren't so dishonourable as to come at you all at once, at least on the medium 'Bushido' difficulty.

BY THE BLADE

However, Trek To Yomi's combat isn't quite up to scratch, from noticeable animation jank to inconsistent and unresponsive inputs. Attacks are fairly simplistic, with either ◎ for a normal slash with your katana or △ for a heavy attack that deals double the damage, and while holding the analogue stick in different directions adds variation, such as a thrust, you probably won't feel the need to use it until you unlock combos requiring these stances.

Combat isn't quite up to scratch, from animation jank to inconsistent and unresponsive inputs.

New combos ought to mix things up although the way they unlock is almost arbitrary – sometimes it's as part of the critical story path, at others through optional encounters. Not that it matters much as for the first half of the game there's little incentive to make use of these skills, since low-level bandits die after two hits while tougher armoured enemies tend to interrupt anything beyond two hits. The most useful move you can learn is how to turn around and immediately attack an opponent behind you, thereby saving yourself the need to press ⊗ to turn around.

Defence is also important, as you hold L1 to block or, better still, tap it at the right time to parry attacks. The latter has unique animations where the action slows down as you step in to counter, though amusingly you'll find yourself lunging forward to close the gap when you parry from a short distance away. But while that should be quite readable, the window feels annoyingly inconsistent, especially against the more aggressive enemies – you'll swear you've got the timing down, only for their attack to cleave off another precious health point.

Things improve to some degree once you do have more interesting armour-piercing and stun-inflicting combos at your disposal as these can make quick work of the tough enemies, who scream in their death throes as blood sprays across the ground or heads roll clean off. It's strange, then, that despite the increased combat encounters later, the game loses





4 The foreground can occasionally obscure your view in combat. But all that matters is your silhouette. 5 Shrines become checkpoints after you interact with them. 6 The environments are more impressive than the characters' faces.



some of its bloodlust as the second half, spent in Yomi, sees you just fighting spirits rather than flesh-and-blood enemies. These chapters are also more bloated, padded with basic environmental puzzles while checkpointing gets stingier, and you'll find yourself having to run through quite a few gauntlets again should you die.

ON BALANCE

Trek To Yomi's seven chapters may not take long to get through – about the length of a Kurosawa double bill – but it's still irksome that after the campaign is over your progress is essentially wiped, with no chapter select or New Game+. As there are three possible endings based on a choice you make in the penultimate chapter, it's probably to prevent you from trying to get the other endings by jumping straight to the second half.

If you're a completionist, however, collectibles are also reset, which is already annoying since the mostly linear structure means if you missed something then there's no way to go back apart from starting all over again. Meanwhile, if you're seeking a challenge you can play the game again in Kensei mode where death comes from one hit, though given the inconsistency with inputs and parries, that's inviting torture.

It's a shame that despite a story about finding balance, Yomi doesn't manage to achieve that itself, being a handsome cinematic homage on an indie budget, but sadly lacking the smooth and satisfying swordplay to back it up.

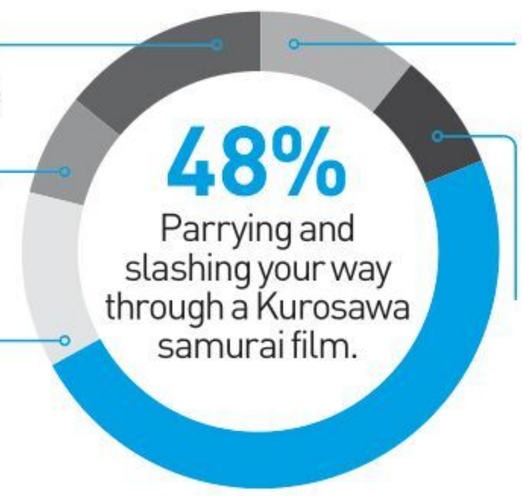


A loving tribute to Kurosawa samurai flicks with a detour to the underworld. A shame that Flying Wild Hog's inconsistent combat fails to match Menchiari's vision. Alan Wen

6 PLAY

THE PLAYBOOK

WHAT YOU DO IN: TREK TO YOMI



14% Replaying encounters due to stingy second-half checkpoints.

7% Looking up what those kanji characters in the puzzle sections mean.

12% Enjoying moments of zen calm before a bloodthirsty duel.

11% Reading fascinating Edo-period Japan and underworld lore in the collectibles.

8% Trying out new unlocked combos only to revert to earlier, more effective ones.

FRIENDS & ENEMIES



SANJURO
Your master, who's training you in the way of the samurai at the very beginning.



AIKO
Sanjuro's daughter and your beloved who you'll go to hell and back to protect.



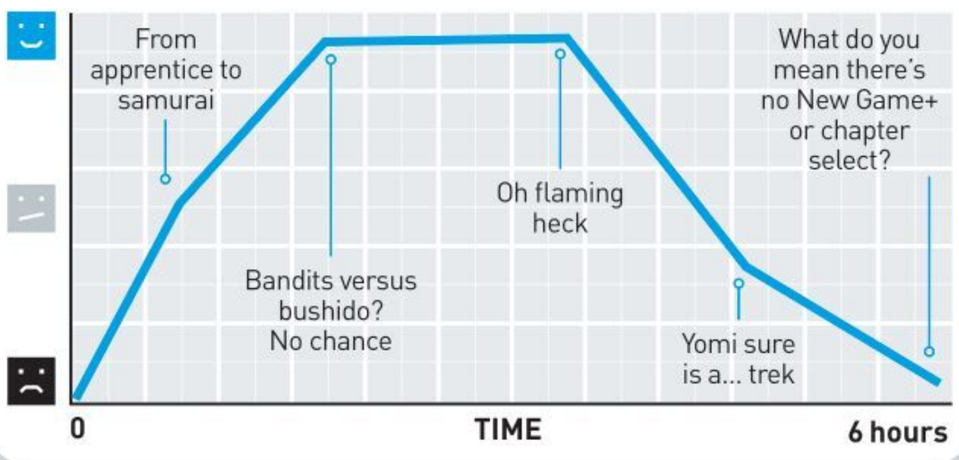
KAGEROU
A ruthless bandit who returns to your ravaged village as a demonic warlord.

HOW TO... RECOVER HEALTH POINTS



Stun an enemy for the opportunity to tap R1 to finish them off with a brutal move that also restores a few health points. Stun-inflicting attacks come from combos that end with a heavy attack using △. Only that attack needs to connect to make your enemy vulnerable.

COMPEL-O-GRAPH



TROPHY CABINET



BRONZE
Kill ten enemies without using any weapon. You are the most lethal thing!



SILVER
Complete a whole chapter without dying and using a shrine to return to play.



GOLD
Beat the game early by killing the boss in chapter 3. What to do now, eh?



Tiny Tina's Wonderlands

Borderlands goes fantasy, with mixed results.



INFO

FORMAT PS5 (reviewed), PS4
ETA Out now
PUB 2K Games
DEV Gearbox Software
PLAYERS 1-4
LENGTH 30 hrs
ACCESSIBILITY Subtitles; closed captions; aim assist; aiming and movement toggle options

Tiny Tina's Wonderlands is what happens when someone at Gearbox says aloud, "what if Borderlands, except a fantasy roleplaying game?" Not a bad idea, really, because Tiny Tina's Wonderlands is probably better than Borderlands 3 in some ways. It's a first-person loot shooter with a bajillion weapons (tick), execrable humour (tick) and farting unicorns (ti... uh, what?).

It's only partially successful though, and that's chiefly because it's still a Borderlands game. This series is probably the best loot FPS going around, though the formula is starting to wear a bit thin, even with a fantasy reskin that tries to over-compensate for a lack of new ideas elsewhere.

Tiny Tina, a familiar and beloved character from previous games, is running a tabletop campaign, and you, the player, are basically watching her gamemaster narration coming to life. It's a neat concept, and leads to an FPS that feels oddly – welcomingly – relaxed. The world ain't ending; we're just playing games. That vibe really makes sense in a game that is best played with friends, and which really feels like Gearbox's loving send-up of RPGs (both table top and computer). Playing Tiny Tina's Wonderlands is a little like bantering with a friend about a hobby, and its vigilant frivolity and freedom to do whatever it wants as a result, is what makes it a heap more fun than its mainline predecessor.

DROLL PLAY

Where the game falls flat is in its structure. TTW has an overworld that closely resembles an actual tabletop RPG, and while the concept is pretty cool (and of course, in keeping with the theme), it's just not a lot of fun to navigate in practice. Add to that random encounters, which teleport the player to a small arena for a shootout against faceless bandits that can last around three minutes – and the game starts to feel like it's moving at a sluggish pace.

The quest design is similarly time wasting. Dialogue often cannot be skipped, which especially grates if Gearbox's brand of highly referential humour isn't for you. Fetching five of that, six of that, and killing ten of that, may be an amusing nod to MMOs, but it's actually just not fun quest design: especially when in between gathering all that stuff, you're subject to a 40 second unskippable spiel.

You could accuse TTW of being DLC that has been swollen to the proportions of a standalone game, but this really feels like its own distinct, and mostly enjoyable, outing. Fans of the series will dig it, assuming they're not burnt out on the formula. But overall, a theoretical Borderlands 4 is going to need a much more thorough reinvention.



Another Borderlands game, though it's much funnier than what has come before. It has questionable design choices, but provides ample satisfying action. **Shaun Prescott**

7
PLAY



Weird West

Never a quiet day in the west



INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA Out now
PUB Devolver Digital
DEV WolfEye Studios
PLAYERS 1
LENGTH 14-16 hrs
ACCESSIBILITY Storm flashing on/off; motion blur on/off; adjustable UI and text size; narrator subtitles on/off

First impressions suggest Weird West is another isometric ARPG in the vein of Diablo 3, or an old school CRPG like Planescape Torment or Divinity: Original Sin 2. But looks can deceive. It's an immersive sim with a much stronger resemblance to Dishonored or Deus Ex. For an independent studio to tackle such an ambitious genre is quite brave, and the team at WolfEye Studios mostly succeeds, at least where it counts.

Weird West has the right pedigree: the director of Prey and co-director of Dishonored is responsible for creative direction here, and those games are both masterclasses in the immersive sim design rule book. That means experimentation is rewarded, and improvisation is encouraged. You can approach Weird West's combat encounters in a great many ways, though most players are likely to default to either a) loudly killing everything or b) quietly sneaking around. For the more creative player, objects placed around the map can be exploited, and unlockable abilities can be mixed together, but overall Weird West plays out like a series of solvable combat puzzles, in a way reminiscent of Shadow Tactics or Desperados 3.

Where Weird West deviates from the templates of those games is its RPG aspirations. Weird West has five mostly discrete stories, and in each you play what is essentially a different character, each with their own story and special abilities. There are branching dialogue trees and a satisfying amount of exploration. What is consistent across all characters is the core combat tools: guns. Weird West's combat works like a very exacting twin-stick shooter, and it's remarkably fun and easy to use, especially with the presence of a Max Payne-style slow-mo ability.

WEIRD FICTION

It's a fascinatingly grim game too; a lot darker than you might expect, though still humorous in a rather bleak way. The setting doesn't offer much in the way of variety, but the opportunity to take on different roles, in addition to the flexibility of the encounters, alleviates the monotony a bit. It may test the patience of some players expecting something with a more ARPG-leaning pace, but Weird West is an admirable and fun effort, though there is an elephant in the room. In some ways, Weird West's whole design philosophy just doesn't feel well-suited to an isometric perspective, albeit one that can be zoomed in closely. It's not a gamebreaker by any means – and this is the classic RPG format, after all – but this really felt like a world that could have been better explored in first person. Hopefully Weird West is a success, and paves the way for an even better sequel.



Weird West is an occasionally brilliant take on the immersive sim, with tonnes of scope for replayability, let down slightly by its restrictive point of view. Shaun Prescott

8 PLAY



Your robot friend gives you blocks to help you cross from point A to point B.

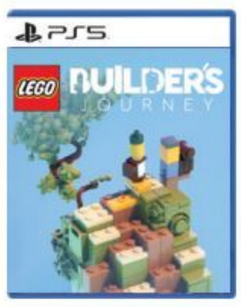
Lego Builder's Journey

A lighthearted puzzle adventure told brick by brick

Lego as a company is always looking for creative ways for players to engage with its blocks. When it comes to videogames, this usually means taking blockbuster IPs and transporting them into the Lego universe, complete with bombastic action and cheeky humour. These huge games take place across multiple worlds with hundreds of characters.

But as epic as the company's adaptations of Star Wars, Batman, and Marvel are, developer Light Brick Studio has taken the Danish toy in a new direction. Lego Builder's Journey isn't an exploration of a brick-built world based on your favourite works of fiction but a more honest and earnest interpretation of the iconic plastic bricks.

There's a simplicity to Builder's Journey. Its puzzles are set on beautiful miniature brick-based dioramas. The goal of each level is simple: to help your character cross from one side of the diorama to the other using the bricks provided. It's all about finding creative solutions – for example, you'll need to build a bridge to cross a stream or a canyon, or construct something to help your character climb rocky cliffs and trees. Some levels ask you to complete your model in a specific way, but most of the time you're free to approach the block-building problems however you like. As long as the bricks click together, there are no wrong answers, and when a puzzle is complete, the chunky characters will use your new structure to hop to the other side of the miniature.



INFO

FORMAT PS5, PS4
ETA Out now
PUB Lego Systems
DEV Light BrickStudio
PLAYERS 1
LENGTH 2 hrs
ACCESSIBILITY Wordless story

BLOCK PARTY

Play is key here, rather than head-scratching puzzles, and that's supported by the way handling the bricks feels incredibly tactile. On PS5, using the DualSense controller, you feel it every time a brick connects with another with a satisfying click, and when a group of pieces knock together you can sense a gentle ripple through the controller.

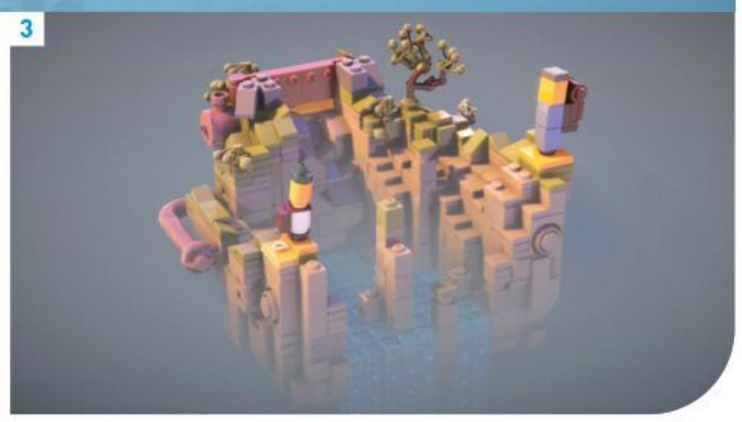
PS5's ray tracing capabilities also allow Builder's Journey to shine. We've seen Lego bricks in other games, but not like this. Each surface reflects light beautifully, especially the translucent ones used for rivers and waterfalls. There's a section where you fall into a dark cave and have to use a lamp for light, and you can see the scratches and fingerprints on the bricks around you. There's an impressive amount of attention to detail.

Even though the bricks look amazing and feel great to manoeuvre, getting them to click into the right spot can be finicky. Awkward controls aren't much of a problem during the laid-back earlier levels, but towards the end, where there are puzzles that require perfect timing, fumbling your block placements grows frustrating. The limited camera view, which snaps back into place if you try to look at the diorama from a

"Lego's ability to evoke personality through little blocks of plastic is always charming."







1 The ray-traced translucent water bricks look super-glossy. 2 The parent will travel first, with the child following closely behind. 3 When you're faced with a big gap to cross, you're going to need a bigger creative solution.

different perspective, doesn't help. The minimal movement also stops you from admiring each intricate miniature island from other angles, which feels like a missed opportunity.

PLASTIC HEART

Builder's Journey is guaranteed to evoke feelings of nostalgia, and its coming-of-age story reinforces this sentiment. The story follows a parent and child as they traverse the brick-built world around them. When the parent is pulled away to a monotonous factory job, the child sets out on an adventure where imagination and curiosity lead the way.

There's not a lot of depth here – a story about a child breaking the instructions set by a parent feels appropriate, if simplistic, for a Lego game – but what's interesting is how these characters are brought to life. The child hops with excitement as they jump from block to block, and a robot built from parts found in a dingy basement greets you with friendly chirps and a wagging antenna. Lego's ability to evoke personality through its little blocks of plastic is always incredibly charming.

With impressive attention to technical detail but a lack of engaging story, this can sometimes feel more like a two-hour technical showcase than an adventure game. Nevertheless, its focus on the freedom of building taps into a sense of nostalgia for everyone who has fallen in love with the block-building toy.

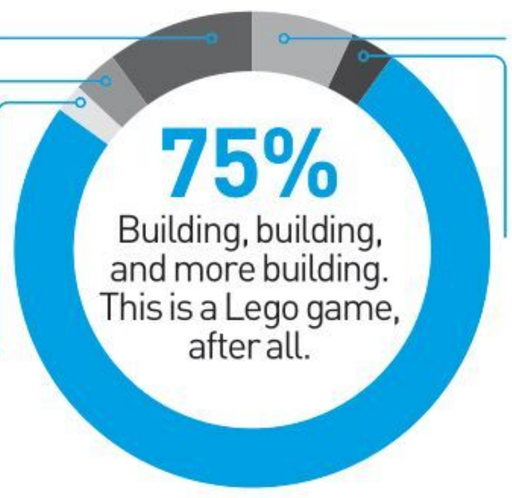


An earnest, if occasionally frustrating, building adventure that boasts impressive technical detail and makes you want to dig out your old box of Lego. Rachel Watts

7 PLAY

THE PLAYBOOK

WHAT YOU DO IN: LBJ



HOW TO... BE A MASTER BUILDER



Even the most creative builders need help, so if you're short a couple of blocks for your epic structure you can ask your antenna-wagging robot friend for help. They'll open their hatch and blocks will tumble out. Where these blocks come from is one of Lego's great mysteries...

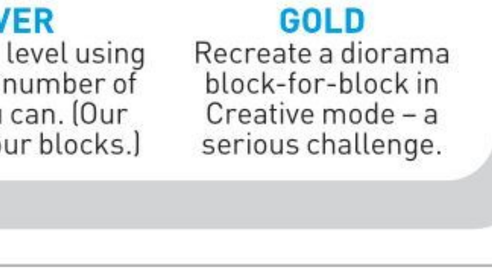
THE DUALSENSE DIFFERENCE



LOVING/HATING



GLOW UP
The bricks have never looked better. Subtle details like fingerprints and scratches make this a beautiful game to look at.



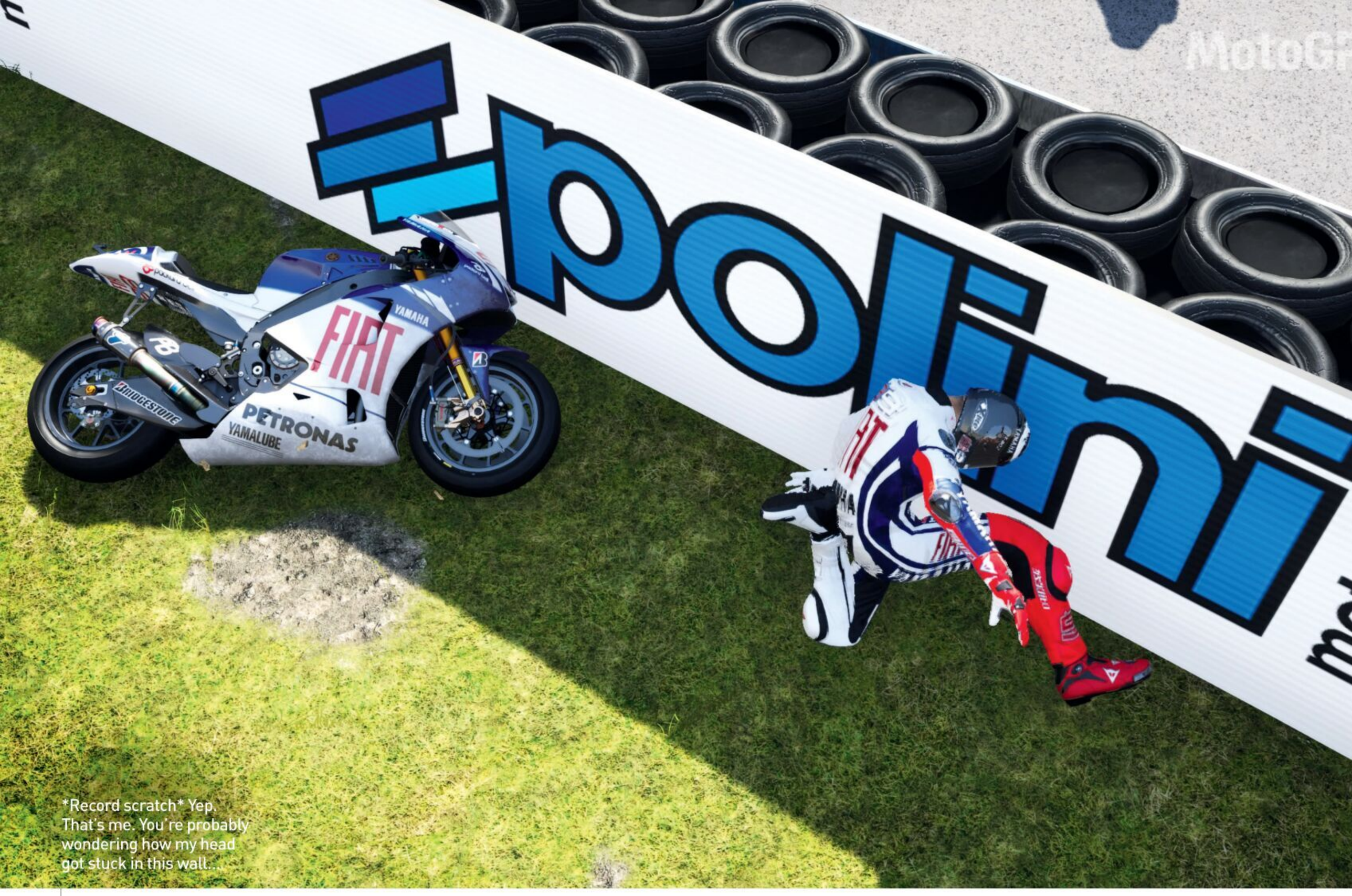
TIME OUT
A handful of puzzles are timed and require quick block-building, sapping the game's spirit of laid-back playfulness.

TROPHY CABINET

BRONZE
Find your way through the dark recesses of a factory floor with only one source of light.

SILVER
Complete a level using the lowest number of bricks you can. (Our record is four blocks.)

GOLD
Recreate a diorama block-for-block in Creative mode – a serious challenge.



Record scratch Yep. That's me. You're probably wondering how my head got stuck in this wall...

MotoGP 22

The 2022 game where 2009 steals the show

After nine years, it's fair to say you know what to expect from MotoGP 22. The latest bikes, teams, and riders, all with better visuals, physics, and presentation. Check, check, and check again. But what if there were something new? Something creative? Well, welcome to Nine – a celebration of the now-legendary 2009 season. Things just got a lot more interesting.

In this mode, real MotoGP footage and driver interviews from the era introduce each famous scenario that you then get to play. Produced and directed by Mark Neale, who made a couple of famous MotoGP films as well as music videos for the likes of U2, the stories and backstories are explained with authority and passion before the slightly pixellated, standard-def footage is replaced with in-engine loveliness, rendered at 60fps by PS5. Heaping lashings of human interest like this on top of an otherwise slightly bland racing pie works wonders for your emotional investment, and the result just goes to show how a decent commentary can make any sport better. If only career mode rivalries could be hyped up to this extent. Instead, familiar pre-race grid scenes accompany generic commentary fluff with extra info about the track conditions.

One of the game's other few remaining shortcomings after so many years of iterative progress is that it doesn't yet support semi-wet tracks. The real-life footage at Le Mans makes a point of the drying track, yet when you take control, it's merely overcast. Full wet-weather racing looks and feels just fine, but it's clearly lagging behind the four-wheeled competition in terms of weather simulation. That aside, the game engine's great, with only some redraw on grandstand crowds and somehow less-impressive bike close-ups than before to break the illusion you're watching the real thing. It's authentic and pristine.



INFO

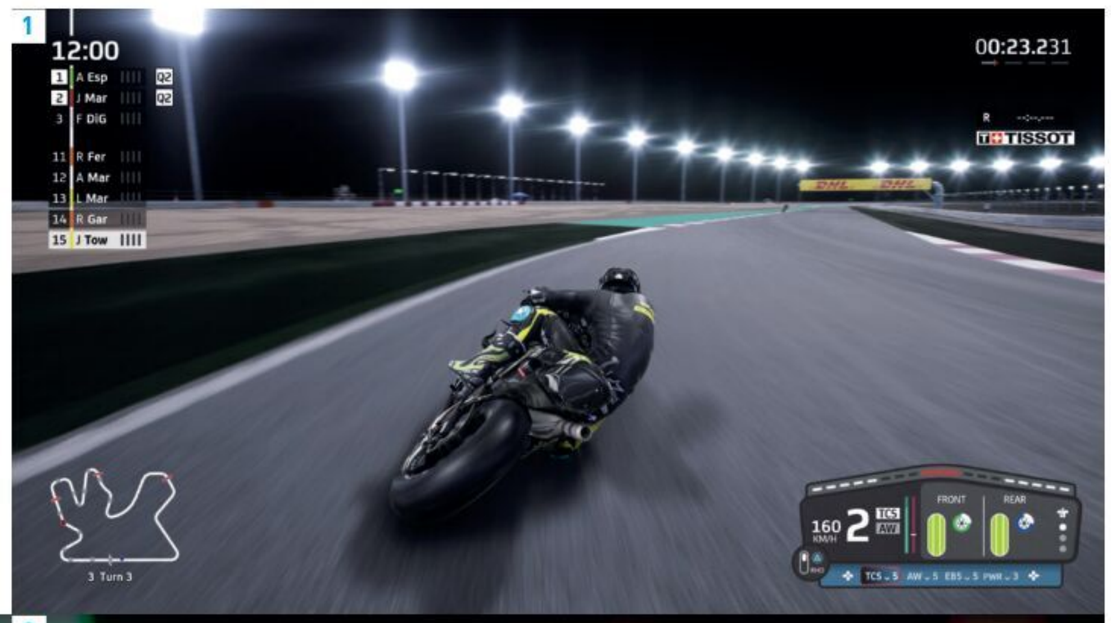
FORMAT PS5 (reviewed), PS4
ETA Out now
PUB Milestone Srl
DEV Milestone Srl
PLAYERS 1-2
LENGTH 4 hrs for the shortest championship, hundreds for the longest
ACCESSIBILITY Motion control available; auto braking and steering assistance

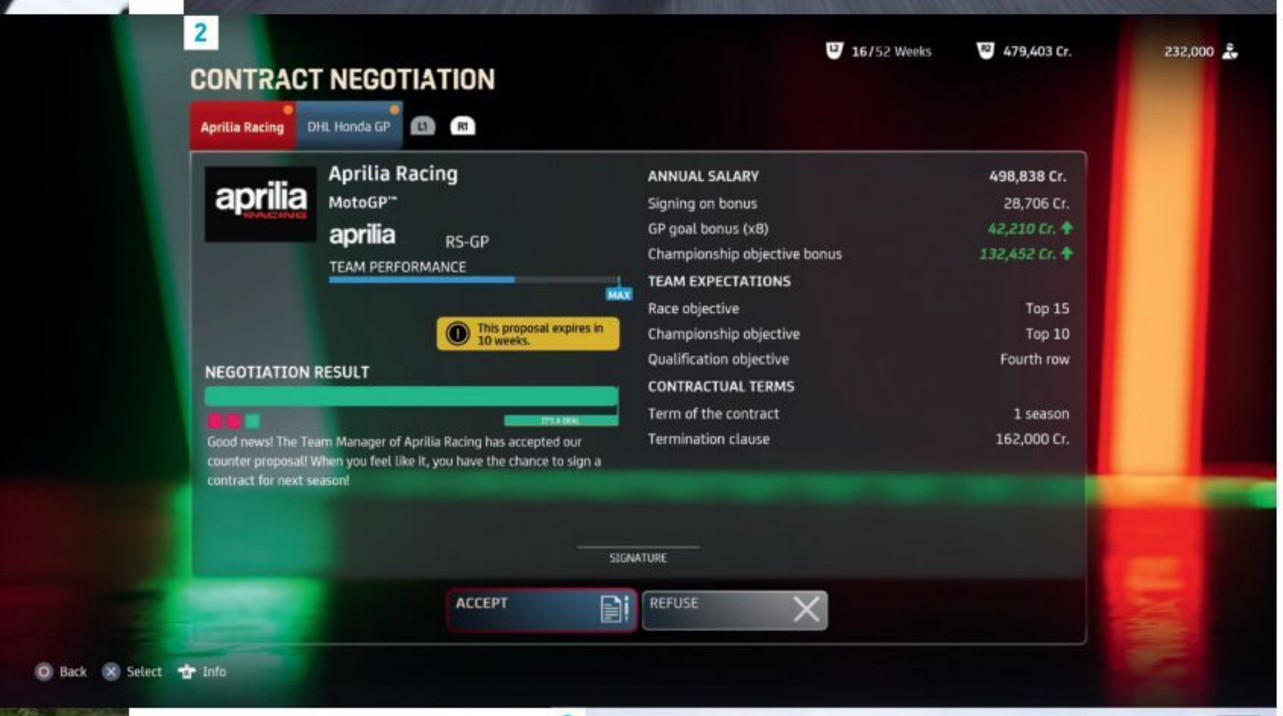
RECOVERY POSITION

Whatever the weather, you're going to fall off a lot, which is frustrating, especially as most crashes can be seen coming ages before they actually happen, with no way to avoid them. Luckily there's a generous rewind button, which you can disable if you prefer to learn from your mistakes rather than erase them. It's invaluable because the alternatives are restarting, a slow reset to standing, or the return of last year's playable 'bike recovery' animation, which sees you running back to your stricken machine in scenes reminiscent of Road Rash on Mega Drive. Sadly, said dash still only applies to you; AI bikers simply respawn however they fall.

In the rare instances when you're on your bike and not ragdolling around beside it, movement is super-smooth and

Movement is smooth and haptic feedback lets you know when you're about to lose adhesion.







1 The Losail lights look wonderful, and reflect off your rider's shiny new leathers. **2** Contracts can be negotiated, agreed, and then (expensively) torn up. Better to be sure first. **3** The framerate stays high even in busy scenes.

the haptic feedback from the DualSense lets you know when you're about to lose adhesion, giving you just enough time to steady the bike, which is great. The difficulty balancing isn't so hot, however, with inconsistently fast AI, and the game sometimes suggests you're too slow on the current skill level, even when you've just won by a clear margin.

TRAINING WHEELS

You can learn to ride much better by taking part in the new, in-depth tutorial mode, which helps you choose which assists to engage. It works well, and the floating icons that can replace the traditional dynamic racing line work just as well without cluttering the screen even half as much.

The career mode is exemplary, allowing you to earn and spend development points and assign hired staff to work on upgrades for your bikes. You can sign team contracts, sacrifice cash to activate your get-out clause and sign with an even better team, or just start up a new one. Championships can be full-length, mid-length, or a mere eight races long, but all the management and testing functionality is there in each, as deep as you choose.

A smooth split-screen mode is available for single races, but it's still not exactly a scintillating way to play. MotoGP 22 is the most assured MotoGP game yet, but Gran Turismo 7 makes similarly realistic and methodical locomotion way more exciting.

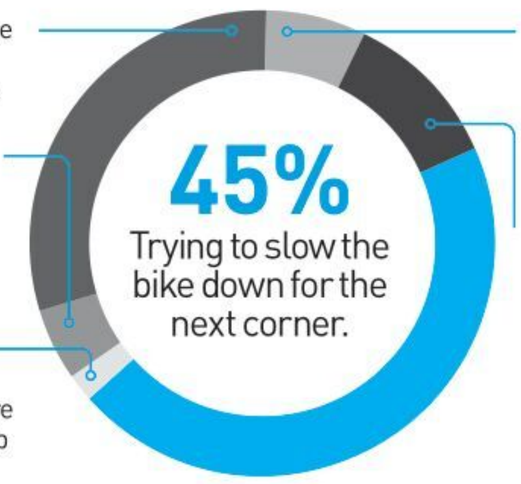


Very familiar racing is given soul by the Nine side-mode. Career gameplay is methodical and punishing, but the game's management element is a triumph. **Justin Towell**

7
PLAY

THE PLAYBOOK

WHAT YOU DO IN: MOTOGP 22



30% Rewinding the action ten metres and braking again.

5% Watching the enjoyable Nine documentary scenes. Lovely.

2% Wondering if an 'accidental' crash would secure your championship win. Muahahaha.

7% Marvelling at how deep into the uncanny valley the grid scenes plummet.

11% Assigning staff to R&D tasks. More staff = faster development.

LOVING/HATING



TWO WHEELS GOOD
The first transition between genuine archive footage and the same shot rendered in-engine is just fantastic.



MORE WHEELS BAD
The AI is just too good sometimes. 'Finish five seconds ahead' is way more easily said than done on medium difficulty.

THE DUALSENSE DIFFERENCE

TILT CONTROL
The DualSense is superb in MotoGP 2022. You can use tilt control for steering and shifting your rider's weight forwards or backwards.



HAPTIC FEEDBACK
And the haptics really tell you how settled the bike is, signalling tyre punishment and impending falls. It can be tiring for your right finger, mind.

STATPACK

168
The number of race weekend sessions in a full GP season, if you have the time to play them all. That's likely to be a lot of crashes at first.

84
Current licensed riders across Moto3, Moto2, and MotoGP. Your fave should be in here. And they all definitely clean their polygonal teeth.

17
Chapters in the Nine side-mode that celebrates the 2009 season, though each one contains several different riders' perspectives to play.

IS IT BETTER THAN?



But not in its original form. Driveclub Bikes was way more fun, but retired servers have diminished its appeal.



MotoGP 22 handles slightly better than Milestone's festival of bikes, and the career feels more rewarding.



Hurtling through realistic countryside is awesome compared to driving on modern tracks.

Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga

Well Wookiee here – something Wicket this way comes



INFO

FORMAT PS5 (reviewed), PS4

ETA Out now

PUB Warner Bros Interactive Entertainment

DEV Traveller's Tales

PLAYERS 1-2 (offline only)

LENGTH 15 hrs approx (story), plus side activities

ACCESSIBILITY Health regeneration on/off; navigation assist on/off; motion blur on/off; camera shake on/off; vibration on/off; aim assist on/off; adjustable camera bob; adjustable subtitles on/off; simplify or autocomplete QTEs on/off

Yes, there have been multiple Lego Star Wars games already, but just as Luke Skywalker felt no shame at chugging that blue milk, so we felt no shame or hesitation in welcoming this game with open arms. And after playing through the whole saga, we can tell you that we *don't* have a bad feeling about this – and that's not Hoth air.

Perhaps one day we'll get a single Lego game that mops up all the Star Wars spin-offs such as Solo, Rogue One, and (dare we dream?) the holiday special. Until then we have this, which includes a handful of levels for each of the mainline movies. You can start playing at the beginning of any trilogy, but the second and third movie level sets within that trilogy must be unlocked in order.

There's a tangible sense that the developers are trying to make this the definitive Lego Star Wars experience. One simple change that's been made is to bring the camera in slightly closer, with the result that you're immersed in this blocky science-fiction world more deeply than ever before. Aim while holding a gun, and it's essentially a third-person shooter, your character becoming transparent so that the camera can zoom in even further. Things are occasionally a little *too* close for comfort – melee combat in tight spaces can result in your character becoming partially or fully obscured – but this is rare enough to forgive.

BLOCK BUSTERS

As this is nine movies in one game, there's little to none of the padding that previous entries have suffered from, some events that previously might have resulted in lengthy platforming sections




There's a tangible sense of trying to make this the definitive Lego Star Wars experience.







1 There's a huge sense of fun throughout. We wish more games were this unashamedly joyous. 2 There's a *lot* of shooting to be done in this game. Upgrade those blasters quick. 3 It's been done better elsewhere to be honest, but taking down AT-ATs is still fun.

being briefly covered in a cutscene. Pretty much all the events that you'd hope to see represented are in here (the Luke versus Vader lightsaber battle, taking down AT-ATs with a Snowspeeder, Rey fighting Kylo Ren above a raging sea) with no need to use weaker filler to connect the dots.

Despite the changes and additions, this has the familiar Lego game core – which is a good thing. Smash up the environment for studs to spend, enjoy the benefits of immortality as you respawn as many times as you need to, switch between characters when you need a particular ability, return to completed levels with new characters to dig out new collectibles… you know the drill.

It's fun, it's accessible, and it even makes the entirety of The Phantom Menace enjoyable (no mean feat). Despite all of the characters and vehicles being toys, it provides a sense of place in the Star Wars universe that other games struggle to attain, and there's plenty of non-canon fun for fans to appreciate. We particularly enjoy unlocking a playable Rancor and wreaking havoc in Cloud City. It's very good, then – but a few things hold it back from being truly great.

Fun, and it even makes the entirety of The Phantom Menace enjoyable (no mean feat).

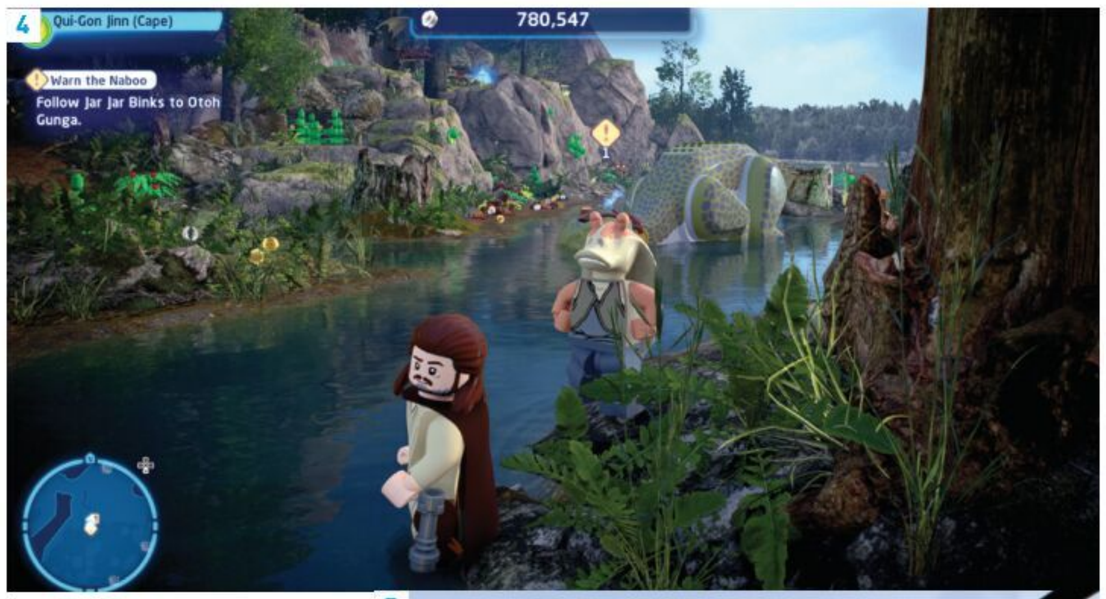
Sadly, what we have here is yet another example of the industry's poisonous obsession with upgrade trees, and its insistence on crowbarring them into games that really, really don't need them. A huge part of the appeal of Lego games is their simplicity; why mess with that? You can theoretically ignore the upgrades, but if you do you'll be stuck with issues such as the base damage and movement speed of characters. This is the biggest upgrade-related problem, because combat never has been, and probably never will be, a strength of the Lego games. Drawing out encounters with underpowered attacks benefits absolutely nobody.

ENDOR THE ROAD

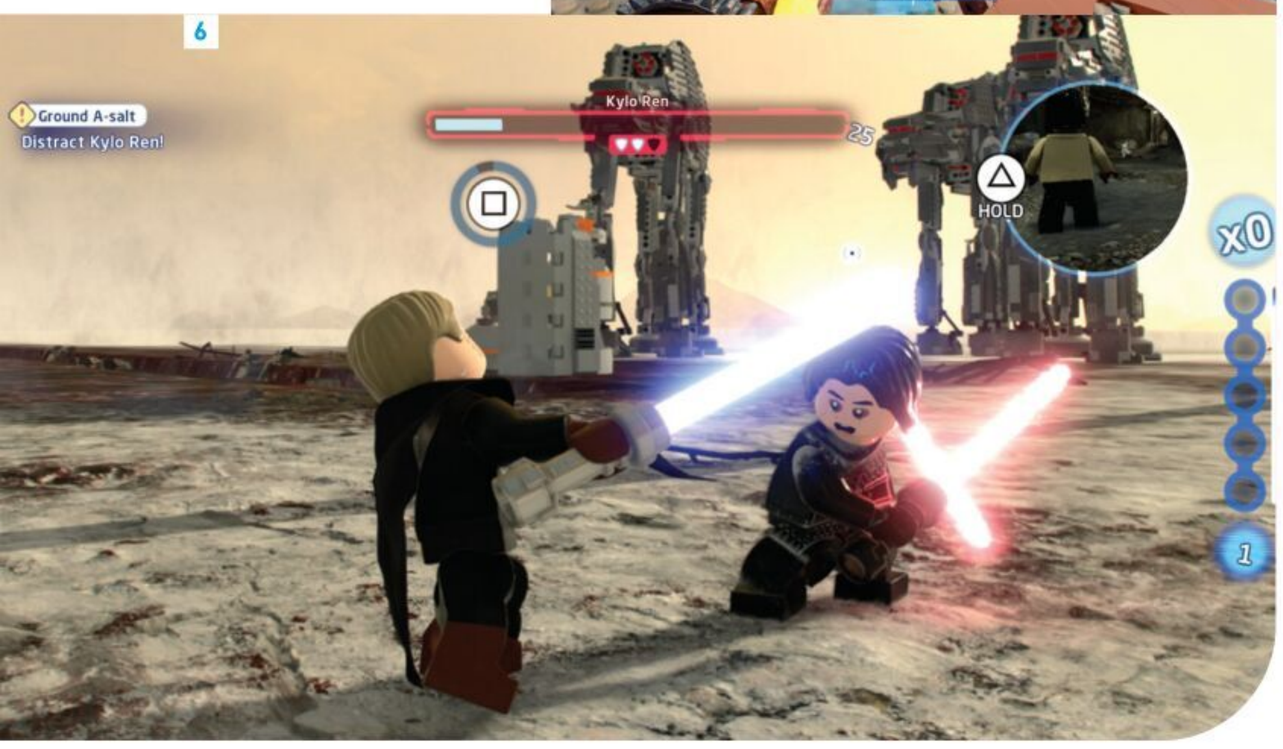
There are also technical issues (and we're not talking about the framerate dips and rare instances of screen tearing that are practically Lego tradition by now). We make it through almost every story level without incident, until the final Rise Of Skywalker level. One of our characters becomes glued to the ground and, later, a boss glitches out and becomes invincible. With no 'revert to checkpoint' option, we have to restart the entire level (although everything goes smoothly the second time around).

It's when exploring in the open-world Galaxy mode that we begin to run into issues more regularly. Nine times out of ten things are fine. But that one time might be an objective marker that fails to kick in or a completed objective that refuses to register. These, at least, are issues that have a good chance of being fixed at some point.

It's a shame to stumble into such pitfalls, because for the most part this is a great Star Wars experience that continues to make an effort outside the story content. While the Galaxy space flight doesn't live up to the more scripted level content (you'll quickly become familiar with the few combat and race







4 Follow Jar Jar Binks? Ugh, do we really *have* to? That Gungan is so annoying! 5 Podracing is criminally brief, but very good. We want a Lego podracing game now! 6 Don't worry, QTEs are fairly rare, and thankfully very easy.

templates), there's more than enough on the surface to keep us happy. Outside of the movie adaptations, the writers have more room to play; one of our favourite side-missions sees us scouring wretched hive of scum and villainy Mos Eisley for witnesses to learn whether Han or Greedo shot first (it was Han, we all know it was Han, *this conversation is over*).

JUST BANTHA MATE

Although it feels like characters and vehicles are slower and more expensive to unlock, you can (for a fee) instantly find out how to unlock anything you particularly want to purchase. Even better, thanks to the ability to fast travel across the galaxy, you can get wherever you need to be pretty darn fast. That's how we managed to take Yaddle on the intergalactic adventure that she deserves.

We're a little conflicted about how we feel about the move to full voice acting. It's not the fact that most of the parts are played by stand-ins; everybody does a good job (although it greatly amuses us that the elderly Obi-Wan sounds more like Ringo Starr than Alec Guinness). There's still an onslaught of visual gags, some of which are laugh-out-loud funny, but there's no denying that the emphasis on straight storytelling for the actors weakens the usual charm.

Despite a few womp rats in the system, the Skywalker Saga more than justifies its existence, offering a playful dive into the world of Star Wars. It seems there's space in Vader's army of games for another entry after all.

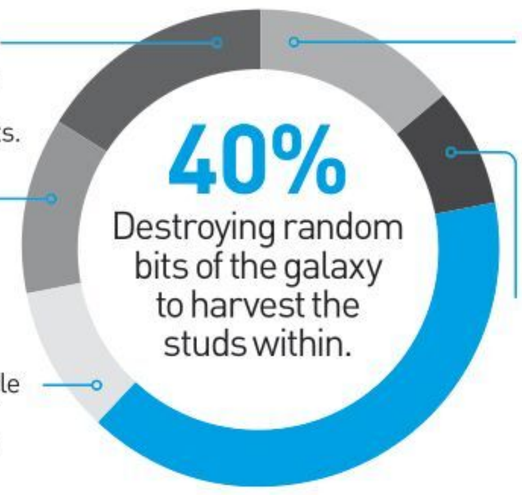


Frustratingly failing to hit (but only just) the heights it could've reached, this is a great reason to fall in love with Lego Star Wars all over again. Luke Kemp

8 PLAY

THE PLAYBOOK

WHAT YOU DO IN: LEGO STAR WARS: TSS



16% Grinning at the John Williams soundtrack and iconic sound effects.

12% Cutting down bad guys (or good guys) with a lightsaber. Thrmmmm!

10% Having a giggle at the gloriously silly visual gags in the cutscenes.

14% Flying a vehicle you loved watching on screen in your childhood.

8% Browsing the character list like it's an intergalactic Argos catalogue.

FRIENDS & ENEMIES



DARTH VADER
Who would've guessed that the wee podracer would grow up to terrorise the galaxy?



EMPEROR PALPATINE
So evil, he causes mayhem in all three trilogies. Boo! Hiss!



HAN SOLO
An utter legend. We love him; he knows. Just don't talk to us about Kylo Ren.

MULTIPLAYER



If you want to play with a pal, it's local co-op only. You get half a screen each, so if you want to wander off and do your own thing, you can (you can locate your partner using the map). You can jump straight into a story level from the open-world Galaxy mode together at any time.

STATPACK

140
Side-missions – and that's not including races, puzzles, and challenges. There's no shortage of things to do outside of the story levels.

10
Upgrade trees. The 'Core' tree is the longest, affecting all characters. Focus on maxing out that one first for the best experience.

500k
Is the number of studs you need to spend to nab slimy Jabba The Hutt as a playable character once unlocked. Let him make himself useful!

IS IT BETTER THAN?



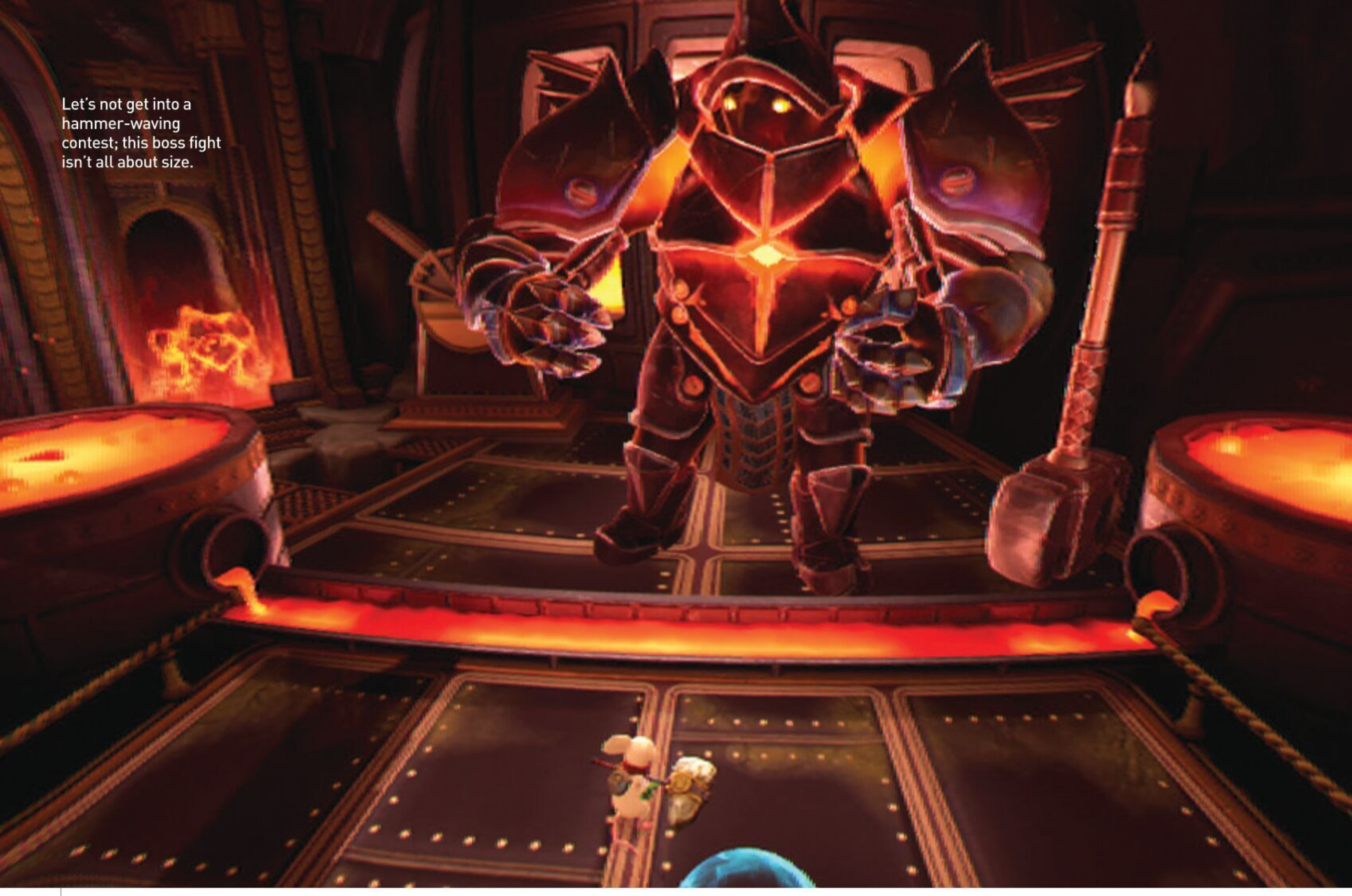
YES
The Skywalker Saga has far less padding, and even more fun (and it's got the other movies too).



NO
They're both very good, but Chase McCain's adventure is much, much funnier and more original.



YES
With no backtracking and frictionless progression, The Skywalker Saga is the superior game.



Let's not get into a hammer-waving contest; this boss fight isn't all about size.

Moss: Book II

Proving PSVR is still small but mighty

During the four years since mousy heroine Quill graced our PSVR headsets, developers have been making the most of both the hardware and medium to evolve the VR experience in new, more challenging directions. Moss: Book II doesn't feel like much of a technical leap forward from its predecessor, but that's because there wasn't really a need for Polyarc to change what was already working.

This second volume of Quill's adventures continues from where the first abruptly ended – with the defeat of fire-breathing snake Sarffog. A confident adventurer with a firmly established bond with you, her Reader, Quill is now ready to take the fight to the mechanical armies of the Arcane to save Moss once and for all.

Cue a journey to new worlds, which appear like portals into pages of a storybook (like the original, this game uses the device of fading in and out between scenes with the sound of a page turning). There's also a fresh cast of characters, from other rodent allies to the leader of the forest sprites, all the better for returning narrator Morla Gorrondona (Destiny, Horizon Forbidden West), who's clearly having a ball acting out the diverse range of voices like any great children's storyteller.

This is still a relatively bite-sized adventure, with a runtime only slightly longer than the first game's. Yet it feels more expansive than the first, covering locations beyond enchanting forests and ruins – there are snow-covered mountains, and even a tower with gravity-defying portals. As before, you play by controlling both Quill (like in a traditional 3D platformer) and the Reader looking down at this diorama-like world, who can reach in to interact with select objects (if you're a PS5 user, note that you'll need to play with a DualShock 4 as its light bar controls the orb's movement).



INFO

FORMAT PSVR
ETA Out now
PUB Polyarc
DEV Polyarc
PLAYERS 1
LENGTH 5 hrs
ACCESSIBILITY Multiple languages for audio and subtitles

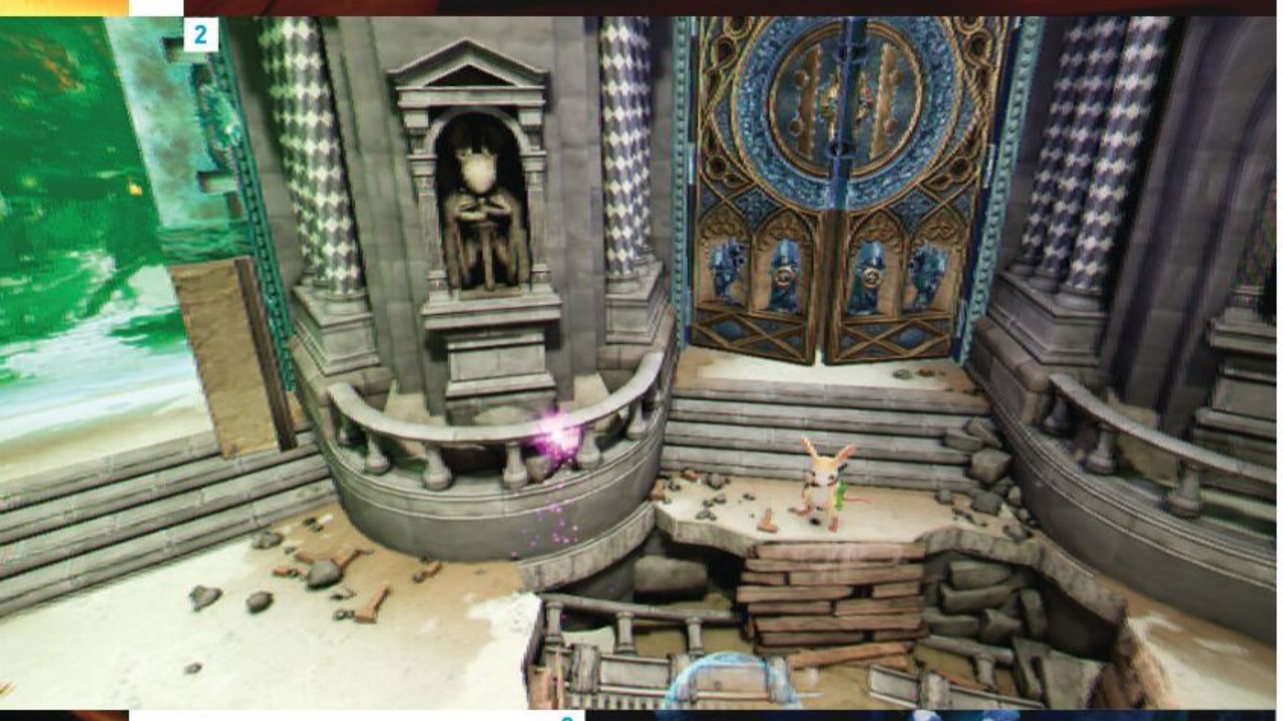
DANGER MOUSE

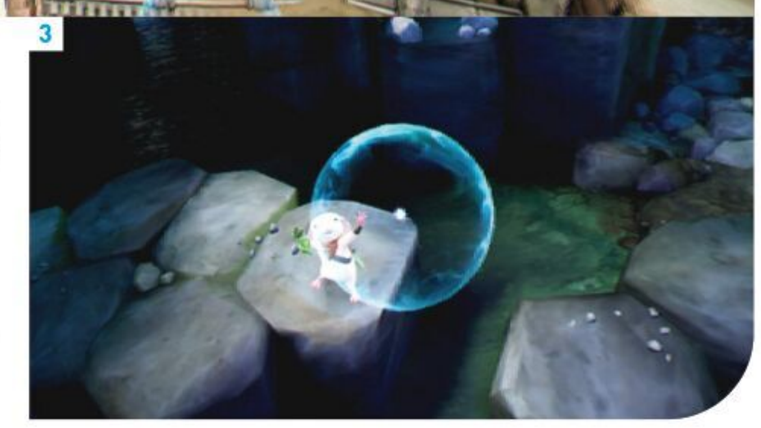
It's the way Quill and the Reader's abilities combine that makes the moment-to-moment puzzle-solving clever and engaging. It also elevates the fairly simplistic sword-slashing combat, as you can step in to freeze an enemy or even take control of one to use as a turret or bowling ball. The new power upgrades also factor into this interplay well, beginning with an ability that enables you to form handy bridges out of plants for little Quill.

Our gutsy mouse holds her own with weapons like a ranged chakram and a mighty hammer that looks almost too heavy for her to pick up. Like in any good adventure game, these tools are important for solving puzzles as well as in combat – in fact, the best boss fights feel very much like puzzles themselves. The additional special abilities also work wonders, such as a warp-dash sword attack that covers a great distance for

"Quill and the Reader's abilities combined makes the puzzle-solving clever and engaging."







1 Chapters conclude with illustrations out of a fairytale book in a library. 2 Your Reader has competition from other floating balls of light jostling for Quill's attention. 3 If Quill puts out her little paw, don't leave her hanging.

crossing previously unpassable gaps. It may feel awkward that you have to reach in with the Reader's orb to activate these abilities each time, but it's also in keeping with the idea that these are powers that you're passing onto Quill as you help her in her quest.

CLOSING THE BOOK

Ultimately, what keeps you invested in the world of Moss is Quill herself, forever an adorable little bundle of joy to be around. Gorrondona does a great job, voicing her in a high pitch that conveys both bravery and vulnerability but it's those attentive animations that really steal your heart, whether she's celebrating after the end of a gruelling wave of combat (in one case, delivering a kick to a gigantic boss after it's been felled) or shaking water from her fur after a platforming mishap. All this makes one mid-game twist especially heartbreaking – but we'll say no more than that (apart from no, she doesn't die. That'd be an immediate 0/10).

Although Book II is often a darker tale, it rouses to a thrilling climax that gives our pint-sized heroine the conclusion she deserves, although you can carry on to re-explore previously visited areas to mop up any remaining collectibles, including a few outfit changes. It's a perfectly fine excuse to turn on your PSVR headset once again, though let's hope Polyarc takes an even more daring approach for PSVR2 if there's a Book III.



Without drastically altering its comfortable VR setup, Moss: Book II is a more expansive sequel in an enchanting world that's a pleasure to spend time in again. Alan Wen

8 PLAY

THE PLAYBOOK

WHAT YOU DO IN: MOSS: BOOK II



29% As the Reader, reaching out to interact with Quill and her world.

6% Watching Quill celebrate with a cute animation and giving her a high five.

5% Turning the pages of Moss' enchanting volumes inside a constantly evolving library.

12% Delighting in Morla Gorrondona's storybook narration.

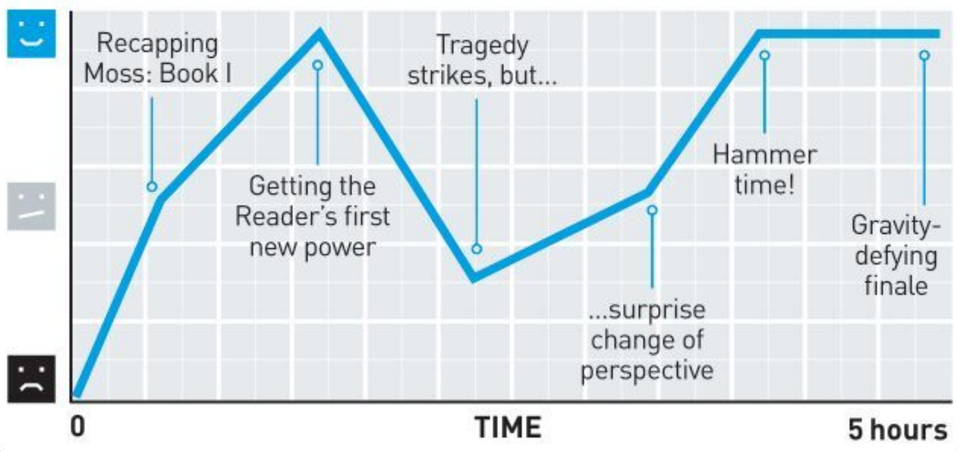
10% Looking all over the diorama-style levels, figuring out a path to those collectible scrolls.

HOW TO... HEAL QUILL



If Quill gets hurt by an enemy, you can heal her by reaching out with your blue orb and squeezing the trigger to hold her in a floating embrace. When she's fully recovered, you get a popping animation. Be warned that this takes a couple of seconds so she'll still be vulnerable to nearby enemies.

COMPEL-O-GRAPH



LOVING/HATING



MAKE THE DREAM WORK
Solving some of the best puzzles involves using Quill's new special powers, which are charged up with your Reader's input.



PROTECT AT ALL COSTS
Seeing harm come to Quill, including your own platforming mishaps that lead to her drowning or falling into a bottomless pit.

TROPHY CABINET



BRONZE
Restore one stained glass window by collecting the required fragment scrolls.



SILVER
Use your power as a Reader to break many objects. Do you feel mighty now?



GOLD
Finish 'reading' the second book of Moss (in other words, beat the entire game).



Stranger of Paradise: Final Fantasy Origin

Jack? Jaaaaaaaack!!



INFO

FORMAT PS5, (reviewed) PS4,
ETA Out now
PUB Square Enix
DEV Team Ninja
PLAYERS 1-3
LENGTH 20 hrs

It's a concept that, in a more logical world, would be laughed off as impossible: take the violent, Souls-like hack and slash of the Nioh series, coat it in a colourful Final Fantasy patina, and for added weird, make the story as hilariously overwrought and edgy as possible. We don't live in a logical world, though, which has its huge drawbacks, but at least it means Stranger of Paradise can exist.

It's ostensibly a retelling of the original Final Fantasy game, and while the story seems to deviate in some key areas, the locations themselves are lush reimaginings of those old 8-bit landscapes. You play as Jack Garland, the baddest of possible badarses, whose syrup-thick badarse dialogue is a rich source of (perhaps inadvertent) humour.

But what matters is this: this really is Nioh as a Final Fantasy game, with a few key changes and optimisations. There are over 20 different jobs to choose from, all of which change combat quite dramatically, and can be switched in and out to choose from mid-battle. For example, you might prefer to get down and dirty with enemies with a big ol' claymore for most of the time, but a quick switch to the mage job will let you take down distant enemies, all the better to clear the room. These can also be synergised in creative ways, but if you're averse to overthinking your load out, there's no reason to do so on standard difficulty.

JOBSEEK

Combat is challenging, mostly because there are so many options available. The balletic switching between jobs is really quite fun, and with the use of Jack's fancy Break Shield, timing blocks perfectly can turn a prickly foe into mincemeat in record time. That's not even touching upon the very many job-specific combos. Like Nioh, the combat onboarding process can be overwhelming.

So can the loot: There's tonnes of it, the great majority useless. Thankfully, Team Ninja lets you optimise each build in your class with a press of the button, eliminating the need to equip the best equipment manually every time you find a loot stash (which is every 30 seconds or so). You might benefit from more careful application of gear, but most players won't need to bother.

It's fun, but boy does it look like crap: even on PS5. Even several weeks after launch, the whole game is smeared in a strange vaseline coating reminiscent of the worst of the PS3 days. That's odd, because the Nioh games, while hardly best in class, look crisp and smooth. That's the only criticism for an otherwise blessedly videogamey game; one that you probably won't remember much of once it's done, but offers a lot of dumb fun anyway.



It's Nioh, but Final Fantasy. It may be an ugly game, but it offers dozens of hours of fun, and a great deal of complexity if complexity is what you seek. **Shaun Prescott**

8
PLAY

INFO **FORMAT** PS4
ETA Out now **PUB** Blitzworks SL
DEV Ansdor **PLAYERS** 1-4



Slipstream

OutRun, 2022-style

This racer has been built as a homage to Sega's OutRun and early '90s gaming. It's best described as a sort of 'OutRun 1.5', as it features scaled sprites just like the 1986 classic, combined with drift cornering and slipstreaming like OutRun 2. Both games are still fondly remembered – so can it possibly be as good as either?

The answer is, sadly, 'no', but it's at least comparable, which is an admirable achievement for its one-man dev team.[1] Nail the drift mechanism and you'll never have to brake for a corner, instead swooshing along between countless smoothly scaled skyscrapers, columns, and trees. There are forks in the road so you can choose the next stage (many of which take their names from 16-bit Sonic The Hedgehog levels, oddly), and there's a rival to beat in each one. The best way to achieve this is by following in the same lane to trigger the eponymous 'slipstream' effect for a speed boost. The various modes and split-screen multiplayer all see you doing the same thing, namely driving as quickly as possible and trying not to crash.

And you *will* crash, as the drifting input takes too long if you've been hugging the inside of a turn that suddenly changes direction. Happily, there's a five-second rewind feature, which recharges over time.

The graphics are disappointingly bland and repetitive, but if you go into the settings and switch on the curved CRT TV simulation[2] and the lower-fidelity 'pixel' mode, things improve dramatically, as the comparative lack of variety in the environment sprites is masked by the resolution hit.

In that guise, it's smooth, fast, and sounds cool, but unquestionably lacks the romance and magic of its muse, which remains gorgeous after 35 years. **Justin Towell**

6 PLAY

FOOTNOTES 1 Namely Sandro Luiz de Paula, aka 'ansdor', who first released a game in 2014. **2** There's an 'NTSC' option for introducing colour problems.

INFO **FORMAT** PS5 (reviewed), PS4
ETA Out now **PUB** Ravenscourt
DEV Digixart **PLAYERS** 1



Road 96

Tyre on tarmac

This is the summer of '96 in the country of Petria, and the climate isn't the only thing starting to heat up. The country's politics are leaning more toward authoritarianism than ever, and as a sham election draws near young people have started to leave the country to escape the impending regime.

Road 96 has you play as these teenage runaways, all on their separate journeys to get to the border and escape to a new life. The story is structured surprisingly like a roguelike, each chapter acting like a new 'run' as you take control of a new teenager. Every journey is procedurally generated and the choices you make along the way affect how you travel, the people you meet, and even Petria's political future.[1]

It's a dangerous journey and one that might end with your current teen being put in the back of a police van, getting caught up in a riot, or dying of starvation. Managing your money and energy meter is vital to survival and that means trying to make smart decisions.[2] You could spend your last $7 on a bus to reserve energy, or save the cash and hitchhike, risking being picked up by the police or a creepy stranger.

Your travels will be filled with seedy motels, grubby gas stations, and highway pit stops as Road 96 is a tale that's constantly in motion. The story it weaves from your multiple playthroughs and different decisions is incredibly clever, and even though the political events that underpin the story are a little tedious, it manages to capture the freedom of travelling but also the tension of trying to survive. A road trip to remember. **Rachel Watts**

7 PLAY



FOOTNOTES 1 You could try to start a revolution, hoping your country can be fixed, or just focus all your energy on crossing the border and giving yourself a chance somewhere new. Choose wisely. **2** Eating food out of trash cans, picking good people's pockets – there are definitely some low points for these desperate young people.

INFO **FORMAT** PS5 (rev), PS4
ETA Out now **PUB** Elden Pixels
DEV Decemberborn **PLAYERS** 1



Cathedral

Back to the old school

Sometimes the modern Metroidvania over-complicates things. Sure, Hollow Knight is great, but playing something like Cathedral brings the comfort of a hot bath after a long day (a bath that never goes lukewarm, or murky). It's old school in the 8-bit style[1], though the pixel art is somewhat more detailed and gorgeous than anything you might have ever played on a NES or Sega. And it's bloody hard, too, both for the unforgiving nature of its boss encounters, and the somewhat overcomplicated way the map unfurls and interconnects.

It's not perfect, or even remarkable really. But it's beautiful, it feels good, and it's possible to spend upwards of ten hours exploring this lushly drawn fantasy world, which is a whole lot more varied and colourful than first impressions might suggest[2]. Cathedral is yet another retro-styled platformer in a crowded market, but like last year's Astalon: Tears of the Earth, it succeeds because the team at Decemberborn know the fundamentals. Maybe too well: it wouldn't hurt for Cathedral to have a few more solid pointers towards where the player must go next, or even towards some of the important items or power-ups that can turn otherwise impossible-seeming bosses into something much fairer.

Cathedral is published by Elden Pixels, the studio also responsible for both Alwa's Awakening and Alwa's Legacy. What all three games share in common is a genuine appreciation and adoration for pixel art, and frankly, time has shown that this graphical approach is one of the sole timeless aspects of our beloved medium. Come to marvel at the art; stay to get killed countless times by one of Cathedral's relentless boss battles. **Shaun Prescott**

8 PLAY

FOOTNOTES 1 In truth, it somewhat straddles the line between 8-bit and 16-bit. **2** Without spoiling anything, the whole game isn't set in dark interiors ike Jaws.



PS5 Hall of fame

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO THE NEW GEN'S GREATEST GAMES



01 Deathloop



Endlessly stylish, we keep coming back to this time and time again. Trapped on a time-looping island, Colt must blast his way out by assassinating eight targets in one day, using special powers to get the upper hand, all while avoiding a (sometimes player-controlled) rival hunter, Julianna. With everything we love about Arkane's games distilled into one hyper-slick experience, this is a must-play.

02 Ratchet & Clank: Rift Apart



A delightful return for the lombax/robo duo, using PS5's power to allow seamless portal hopping and stunning vistas and DualSense to give the comically large arsenal real oomph. A real showpiece that feels marvelous in the hands, and makes the case for PS5 exclusives.

03 Demon's Souls



Not many games allow you to feel the thrum of a gigantic heart in the controller. From sword slashes against nightmarish creatures to feeling magic fill your hands, this stunning recreation of the PS3 classic is a tour of just what makes PS5 so great.

04 Uncharted: Legacy Of Thieves Collection



The best got better. Presenting Nathan Drake's final outing alongside spin-off The Lost Legacy, this collection implements a range of PS5 features. Higher framerates smooth out the action, haptic feedback boosts gunfights, and 3D audio adds a new dimension to the banter.

05 Final Fantasy VII Remake Intergrade



Cloud and the gang get a glow up with better visuals and slicker combat that limit breaks this bold reimagining of the Midgar section. Yuffie joins in with an extra story that bridges the gap between this and what's to come, cleverly playing on nostalgia and fan expectation.

06 Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales



A new hero for a new generation, Miles Morales swings onto PS5 with a new sense of purpose. The low-key story offers a more intimate Spider-adventure than Parker's bombastic escapade, but when the action kicks in the ray-traced visuals light up the screen.

07 Control Ultimate Edition



Jesse Faden's mind-bending, environment-destroying, object-chucking new-weird adventure sings on PS5. A frame rate of 60fps delights, and Remedy's use of ray tracing is among the best we've seen. The only problem is you have to pick only one of two visual options.

08 Hitman 3



On PS5 Agent 47's latest hit list looks beautiful – oh boy, those reflections. The good news is not only can you play the latest missions on PS5, you can replay all missions from Hitman and Hitman 2 inside IO's new PS5-developed engine. That's *a lot* of content.

09 Astro's Playroom



Free and pre-installed on your PS5, this is more than a showcase for your new console's best, most innovative features. Astro's Playroom is a beautifully-crafted, if short-lived, platform adventure that takes a tour through everything that makes PS5 so special.

10 Resident Evil Village



Ethan Winters discovers why this village's house prices were so low. As he searches for his stolen baby, tall vampire Lady Dimestrecu tees off a host of supernatural nasties in the slickest Resi to date, mixing bombastic action with some series-topping fright.

11 Ghost Of Tsushima Director's Cut



Feeling like a fresh take on Assassin's Creed, the open-world island of Tsushima is engaging to explore, and thanks to minimal UI, endlessly beautiful. Combined with weighty combat and tricksy stealth, this supercharged version feels like a real epic.

12 NEW Gran Turismo 7



Like taking a bath in luxury motor oil while Yamauchi and the rest of Polyphony Digital relax you with cosy car history. The good vibes are matched by fantastic visual fidelity, and car handling enhanced by the DualSense controller for unparalleled driving feedback.

13 Solar Ash



Playing like a cross between Jet Set Radio and Sonic, gliding through the Ultravoid feels buttery-smooth. The subtle rumble of the DualSense offers an immersive layer to both movement and the action of pinning down an enemy. This is well worth losing yourself in.

14 Guilty Gear Strive



If this is the smell of the game, then we don't need any candles. Brash as ever, and laden with head-banging tracks, this anime-styled fighter is a spectacle to watch or play. Pared-down mechanics make it accessible, but there's still plenty of depth for skilled players.

15 The Nioh Collection



Team Ninja is on top form with its unique samurai take on soulslikes. Tough as hanzo steel, both games run great on PS5, and offer nearly 200 hours of co-op demon-slaying action that'd put even Yojimbo through his paces. It's a challenge well worth taking on.

16



Elden Ring

Souls goes open world, and FromSoftware makes sure to do things its way: with minimal handholding, but plenty of digit-strewn enemies. Each hill teases strange dark fantasy sights just over the crest, and the game keeps surprising (despite some rare repetition).

17



Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order

Cal and BD-1 Jedi jump over any hurdles the original release threw their way, PS5's power making this feel like the game it should have been at launch. While a little safe at times, this adventure feels like classic Star Wars as you explore planets metroidvania-style.

18



Horizon Forbidden West

Stunning to look at on PS5, Aloy's new quest gets even more science-fictional. While more of the same in some regards (there are plenty of question marks to explore and camps to clear), in big machine fights the metal really shines, and there are some absolute units here.

19 NEW



Ghostwire: Tokyo

Possessed by ghost hunter KK, Akito has to put a stop to a masked villain who has unleashed demonic fog all over Tokyo. The open world is packed with collectibles and side-missions that explore Japanese folklore, and the DualSense-rumbling combat is punchy.

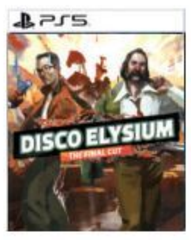
20



Final Fantasy XIV: Online

Endwalker presents a compelling conclusion to this MMORPG's decade-long storyline. The journey on PS5 from the beginning is a smooth one too, boasting breezy load times across Eorzea and beyond. Besides all that, who doesn't want to be a cool cat- or bunny-person?

21



Disco Elysium: The Final Cut

Welcome to Revachol. You're a mess of a cop with no memory and barely any clothes. Solve a hanging, invent communism, sing karaoke... but do it your way. Skill check successes and failures pave a story of your own, and the writing is superb.

22



Hades

After a wait, Supergiant's latest rushes to the defence of roguelikes and leaves us going "Hell yeah." It effortlessly pulls off that 'just one more go' feeling thanks to fast, frenetic combat and the rewarding nuggets of story each death treats you to. Slick and stylish.

23 NEW



Paradise Killer

Welcome to the bizarre, regenerating island of Paradise, where the ruling Council has been murdered. Play as expert investigator Lady Love Dies and explore the vaporwave landscape, in which you have unmatched freedom to find or fail to find the truth.

24



Bugsnax

You are what you eat in this peculiar adventure that's not afraid to walk (and crawl) its own path. Scour Snaktooth Island for its missing denizens, wolf down a handful of Snax... and see what happens. It doesn't exactly push PS5, but it will test your imagination.

25



Grid Legends

Sticking like glue to the racing line between arcade racer and sim, this is Codemasters at its most finely tuned. A cheesy FMV story mode gets you in the mood to put your foot down and amass a huge garage of racing modes, types, and vehicles. The stuff of Legends.

PLAY ON

Know what you like and looking for more? Here are some PS5 options you'll enjoy



Been loving **Grid Legends** thanks to the combination of classic Codemasters' racing prowess and its surprisingly gripping Driven To Win FMV story mode? Want more? Drop that driving seat back and relax, we've got some eclectic recommendations to get you up to speed.

PICK #1



Need For Speed

New number, who 'dis?

Not our favourite Need For Speed by a long shot (don't be fooled by the name, this is the 22nd in the series), but it *is* one of the only racers that might be able to scratch the strange itch for more Driven To Win. A soft reboot, the core NFS characters are introduced to you through live-action cutscenes, and then call you constantly between speedy if by-the-numbers street races. Thankfully, it didn't become standard, making this an interesting curio to revisit.

PICK #2



Erica

Big screen to small screen to smaller screen

This month's wildcard, Flavourworks' 2019 FMV mystery/thriller doesn't have anything to do with racing. Instead, when playing the Sony-published game you use either a companion app or the DualShock's touchpad to interact with elements of the story and make decisions, as you help Erica uncover the truth behind her father's death. The story is always ongoing, with your decisions only affecting your path through it, and the knowledge you obtain.

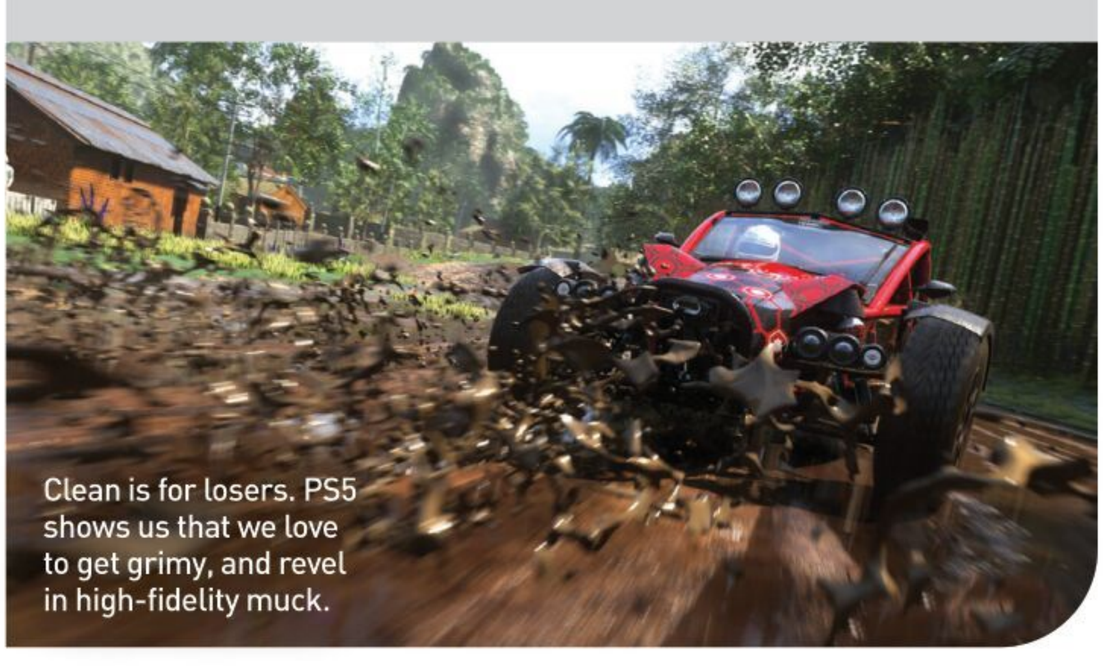
PICK #3



Dirt 5

Codies shows us a muddy good time

Where Grid masterfully combines a wealth of car racing disciplines, Dirt 5 is all about getting dirty the rally way. One of PS5's earliest natively enhanced games, during the console's launch months it was our go-to for thrill-seeking racing. Taking an arcade approach to the point-to-point sport, it's more about having a good time than executing every corner expertly. Though, with only a fairly basic career mode, you'll have to be okay with just that.

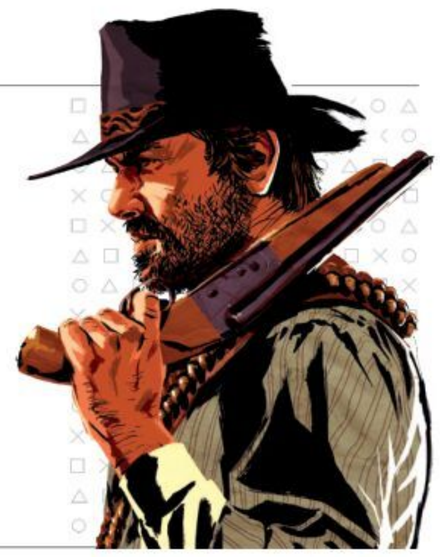


Clean is for losers. PS5 shows us that we love to get grimy, and revel in high-fidelity muck.



PS4 Hall of fame

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO THE LAST GEN'S GREATEST GAMES



01 Red Dead Redemption 2



You won't find another open world quite like this, the streets of Los Santos paling in comparison to this gorgeous western sprawl. Arthur Morgan's wild west adventure is epic, emotional, and has enough teasing mysteries on every Horizon for no two cowboys' journeys to feel the same. Train robberies, tootin' headshots, and killing racists, there's never a dull moment in Rockstar's greatest.

02 Grand Theft Auto V



Laughing in the face of other cross-gen ports, GTA V on PS4 is more than a mere HD remaster. Upped to a glorious 1080p, it weaves together everything that made the PS3 original great, with new music, more dynamic weather, and a game-changing FPS mode.

03 God Of War



A departure in some ways but a resounding return in others, Kratos is back with a son *and* a ruddy big axe. Taking the legend from Greek to Norse mythology, this entry brings a lot to the table while improving on what was core to the earlier series' identity.

04 The Last Of Us Part II



Arguably the original is holistically better but there are few games that push PS4 to its limits as this sequel does. With near photoreal visuals, emotional twists that land, and enough new ideas to ensure you're always thinking, this is a slick followup.

05 Dreams



This is a feature-laden platform of artistic tools that enables you to create everything from characters, elements, and scenes to entire games, and resets any ideas about what a console 'game' should be and do. Dreams should be installed on every PS4.

06 The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt Game Of The Year Edition



The White Wolf's epic journey is an RPG experience like no other on PS4. It's been made even more spectacular with this gigantic pack stuffed with DLC, making it a must-have part of any gaming library.

07 Assassin's Creed Odyssey



A beautiful open world where every Greek island tells a unique story, AC Odyssey is a epic in the truest sense, with lively writing, mythical beasts to battle, and a poignant Assassin's Creed story that lays the bed for all the lore to come. A brilliant spectacle.

08 Horizon Zero Dawn



A staggeringly large world that condenses cracking combat, accessible systems, and uncut eye candy into an action RPG that will please anyone. In Aloy, PlayStation might just have a new icon. Come for the robo-fights, stay for the exquisitely dense mythology.

09 Marvel's Spider-Man



Borrowing heavily from Rocksteady's acclaimed Batman series, this delivers the heart and soul of Marvel's superhero. It ticks every box you could ask for: perfect web-swinging, a powerful story, a roster of classic villains, and all of New York City to defend.

10 Persona 5 Royal



The most stylish JRPG ever made finds its definitive form in expanded release Royal. It combines dark and moving teen angst with unforgettable friendships that power you up in the heart-invading dungeons, and sets the gold standard for the genre.

11 Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice



FromSoftware's latest adventure repackages its unflinchingly difficult combat into a fantastical take on feudal Japan. More accessible than Bloodborne but layered with equally clever and subtle ideas, this is director Hidetaka Miyazaki's best yet.

12 Bloodborne



With the finest third-person melee combat in gaming, droolworthy art design, and the most twisted monsters imaginable, this is a gorgeously gothic must-have. The Old Hunters expansion adds enough nightmare fuel to make a return to Yharnam essential.

13 Monster Hunter: World



Presenting a vibrant open world, light on story but heavy on monster-mashing action, this is the most accessible entry in the series yet. Perfecting the feel-good grind through its complex systems and pitch-perfect multiplayer, it's a PS4 must-play.

14 Resident Evil 2



Powered by the RE Engine, this remake is more than a classic game with a facelift. The new Tyrant and improved zombie AI add tension, and fresh areas not seen in the PS1 classic update the core gameplay making this Resi 2 a celebration of PS1 *and* PS4.

15 Yakuza 0



Set in Japan in the '80s, this is the perfect entry point to the long-running series. Bouncing between two heroes, you take part in a crime thriller by bashing enemies into dropping piles of cash, and undertake side-quests that include stealthily buying pornography.

16 

Psychonauts 2

Level design and narrative mesh together in this long-awaited sequel. Bounce around vibrant, ever-creative platform worlds inside other peoples' minds as you help them conquer trauma – and save the world. Ever-warm, the script is one of the funniest around.

17 

Nier Automata

Few games require immediate replaying, but this *demands* it. The twisty-turny story reveals more just when you think you're done, and the android combat as you explore is top-notch thanks to PlatinumGames' expertise in creating character action titles.

18 

Mass Effect Legendary Edition

A space opera in game form. Explore the galaxy as you try to stop a universe-wide threat, building a team of the best as you go. The adventures are better than ever in this smoothed-over version. A fan of science-fiction sagas? You owe it to yourself to have one of your own.

19 

Days Gone

On the surface this seems to be a step backwards: a testosterone-fuelled Freaker-killing adventure, one man and his bike versus the apocalypse. Slowly you realise Bend Studio's playing with you, and everything's flipped on its head – while the action's excellent throughout.

20 

Dragon Quest XI: Echoes Of An Elusive Age

JRPGs don't get more classic-feeling than this, but DQ embraces its traditional qualities, giving its turn-based fights and Toriyama-designed visuals a modern overhaul. This is an adventure that'll stick with you.

21 

Dishonored 2

The follow-up to a PS3 great, mixing a creative skillset with impressive level design to create a Kaldwin-ning immersive sim. From the shifting rooms of The Clockwork Mansion to learning to link your powers, there's so much scope for experimenting.

22 

Alien: Isolation

Explore Ridley Scott's original vision of a horrifying future in startling fidelity, as this game recreates the tension with an attention to detail that borders on the obsessive. It's time to remember what made the xenomorph so scary... and then get killed by it.

23 

Shadow Of The Colossus

Bluepoint completely overhauls the visuals of Team Ico's masterpiece but still manages to match the original step-for-step in its remake. New controls and a beautiful photo mode add to the package. Wander's tragic quest has never looked or played better.

24 

Tekken 7: Definitive Edition

The title for best fighter on PS4 is fiercely fought over, but for our prize money King remains the, er, king. Easy to pick up, with plenty of depth, few fighters feel quite as crunchy as this. With all DLC characters now released, from Noctis to Negan, it's time to get sweaty.

25 

Mafia: Definitive Edition

The mobster fantasy comes to life in this full-on remake. What was once stiff now drips period atmosphere, and while the open world is still mostly set dressing, it delivers a rollicking and affecting crime story. Any limitations almost feel refreshing in retrospect.

STILL PLAYING

Games that continue to hold our attention

PICK #1



Grand Theft Auto III

Oscar Taylor-Kent keeps getting pulled back in

With GTA V making the jump to PS5, and rumours about a successor swirling, I had to pay my respects to the original don. The third entry introduced myself and many others to the thrill of open-world sandboxes. I'm playing the Definitive Edition, and while it's definitely ropy, some of the ways it's been smoothed out, like the improved aiming, make it fine for a trip down memory lane. The checkpoints, however, could still use some work. Having to drive from the start of a mission to the cumbersome action still grates.

PICK #2



Carrion

Rachel Watts is crushing the bones of her enemies

In Phobia Game Studio's 'reverse horror' platformer, I am having the time of my life playing as a bloodthirsty monster. In Carrion's first hour, I had as much finesse as a ball of wet spaghetti. But I now know how to control my tentacled friend and am causing chaos. Tearing my way through the confines of the underground military base, crushing the small bodies of the helpless humans as I go, feels incredible – if totally gross. Carrion has taken a huge chomp out of my time and I'm loving every second.

> Crushing the small bodies of the helpless humans as I go feels incredible – if gross.

PICK #3



Hypnospace Outlaw

Jess Kinghorn has a warped look at her online past

I enjoyed Turning Red's take on being 13, though the film doesn't explore the internet culture of that age group. Hypnospace Outlaw has the dubious honour of filling that niche, imagining an alternate 1999 in a way that gets to the heart of what was a surreal online landscape. As a souped-up moderator, I'm scouring pages tinged with compression artefacts and turning techie detective down sprawling internet rabbitholes. Along the way, I meet some characters who make this a real (web) page turner.



This leftfield take on yesteryear's tech creates a world you'll want to get lost in.



PSVR Hall of fame

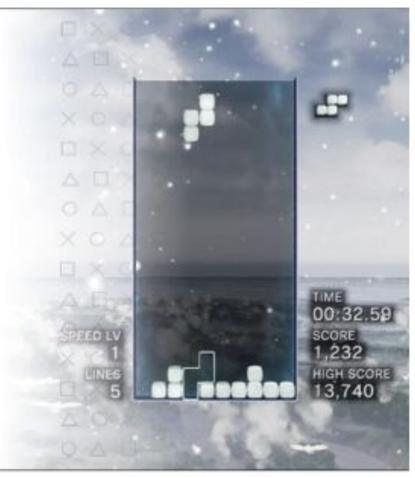
THE VIRTUAL REALITY HITS YOU HAVE TO PLAY

01



Tetris Effect

Tetris, yeah? It might be a great game, but it's easy to understand why you'd brush this version off as 'just more Tetris' at a glance. Yet Tetsuya Mizuguchi's trippy, transcendent take on the block-based puzzler is nothing short of a masterpiece. Sure, you can play it without PSVR, but in the virtual space it really becomes next level, transforming one of the tightest puzzle games ever made into an emotional ride.



02



Hitman 3

Every mission in the World Of Assassination trilogy can be played in PSVR via the latest entry in the series. That's a *lot* of murderous action. It all plays brilliantly too, with the act of puzzling through hits as Agent 47 perfectly suited to virtual reality. One of PSVR's best.

03



The Persistence

This first-person horror roguelike offers perfectly sized chunks of survival bursts. It's everything you'd expect from a full PS4 release, but in PSVR it's filled with clever ideas, unique weapons, genuine jump scares, and fab looks – plus great couchplay as well.

04



Rez Infinite

Tetsuya Mizuguchi's vision becomes reality in PSVR. This psychedelic rhythm rail shooter has achieved its final form. Its crowning achievement? New level Area X; it's powerful enough to bring players to tears. Worthy of its name, this is a timeless title.

05



Astro Bot Rescue Mission

This pint-sized adventure packs charm in spades even if it isn't exactly chock-full of challenge. Bringing the classic puzzle platformer formula bang up to date in PSVR, it won't take many levels before you're calling out, "Beam me up, Botty!" Also, the nippers will love it.

06



Star Wars: Squadrons

A fan's dream come true: experience epic Star Wars space battles from the cockpits of the films' most famous starfighters. Whether you're flying a TIE fighter or X-wing there's absolutely no thrill like skimming the surface of a Star Destroyer in PS VR.

07



Iron Man VR

With a finely-crafted control setup that enables flight within small sandbox maps, and gives you the option to inhabit the designer shoes of the billionaire playboy too, Iron Man VR is an almost-perfect interpretation of the famous Avenger. It's a PSVR must-play.

08



Blood & Truth

The truth? You can't handle the truth. But if you can, then you'll discover one of PSVR's best shooters, tied to the kind of slick cinematic narrative we're used to from Sony's non-VR releases. Blood & Truth is one of the most complete games for PSVR.

09



Keep Talking And Nobody Explodes

Who knew bombs could bring people *together*? With one headsetted Defuser, and as many Experts as you can fit around a 23-page manual, no other VR game comes close for inclusive, endless multiplayer fun. Just make sure you don't let Ian issue any instructions – KABOOM!

10



Statik

Saw meets Portal in this fantastic puzzler. It makes ingenious use of the DualShock 4 by giving every button a specific function. You'll need to use them all to free your hands from the strange box in which they're trapped. An intriguing concept done well.

11



Firewall: Zero Hour

There's only one game mode, a cat-and-mouse assault to find and either destroy or protect a laptop, but when the shooting is this laser-focused, who could want more? A PS Aim controller is a must to get the most from PSVR's standout shooter.

12



Resident Evil VII: Biohazard

Can you can go eye-to-eye with the Bakers? Playing in VR raises the tension to almost unbearable levels and has gameplay benefits such as face-aiming, which makes shooting a lot easier. A brilliant example of how VR can improve already great games.

13



Sniper Elite VR

With realistic gunplay at the heart of this series, it was always going to be a natural fit for VR. But its support for an array of setups and how it squeezes a truly impressive amount of tension into 20-minute missions means this hits the bullseye of VR greatness.

14



Doom VFR

A new take on a classic game, this proves first-person shooters can shine in PSVR. A mix of control choices, including the PS Aim controller, ensures Doom is as fast and fluid in VR as it's ever been. Every PSVR owner needs this demon-slaying outing in their collection.

15



To The Top

This creative platform-puzzler enables you to scamper, jump, and skate across its 35 sandbox worlds with the aid of your PS Move controllers. It's as physically demanding to play as it is perplexing, and all the better for it. To The Top is a PSVR one-off.

16



Star Trek: Bridge Crew

Mixes the fanboy fantasy of nestling in the Captain's chair (or taking control of the helm, weapons, or engineering section) on a USS starship with the strongest co-op experience on PSVR. This is Star Trek's finest hour on PlayStation, and the community's *great*.

17



Everybody's Golf VR

Golf and virtual reality go together like ham and eggs or rhubarb and custard. Mmm, tasty. In PSVR you swing and chip shots, lean over putts, and become immersed in the act of putting a ball in a small hole. It's near perfection, and one of PSVR's essentials.

18



Sprint Vector

A crazy mix of SSX racing and obstacle course hijinks, Sprint Vector makes use of the best control setup on PSVR to deliver a near-perfect experience. A single-player Challenge mode and online races impress; only the poor single-player AI holds it back.

19



I Expect You To Die 2: The Spy and The Liar

A spy comedy offering a front-row seated experience. Known as The Phoenix to your foes, you thwart villains across six missions delightfully steeped in genre tropes. Short, silly, and slick – like only the best agents.

20



The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim VR

Though compromises have been made to texture detail and controls, you get all – yes, *all* – of The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, including the expansions, inside PSVR. It's immense. The scale and organic nature of the world at your feet overcomes any shortcomings.

21



Beat Saber

With your PSVR headset firmly on and PS Move controllers in hand, Beat Saber feels like the game both pieces of hardware were made for. In it you have to master songs and challenges by swiping your neon swords through the air and dodging with your head.

22



Moss

Guide adorable mouse heroine Quill through a fantasy storybook world full of virtual puzzles, fights with insects, and perfectly pitched Disney influences. There's no need to say cheese, because you'll be smiling as you play, all day long. This is effortlessly charming.

23



Accounting +

One of PlayStation's funniest games is a dark, twisted journey into the world of accounting. No, don't walk away now! It's an Inception-like dive into increasingly bizarre and frequently hilarious scenarios that will scratch the itch of any Rick And Morty fan.

24



Farpoint

This sci-fi shooter is a brilliant showcase for the PS Aim controller, a versatile bit of kit that makes the satisfying range of weapons it stands in for feel weighty and real. The game matches it, delivering a strong story and challenging co-op for great VR action.

25



Knockout League

Punching things is possibly the least creative use of the VR medium, but when it's used to create a classic arcade boxing sim that plays like a brutal puzzle puncher, it's irresistible. It's also good for you: it tracks your calorie count as you work up a sweat.



WHAT'S NEW PLUS-SY CAT?

Digging into the random acts of gaming a lengthy PS Plus subscription offers

Last month's lineup offered rebels, tricksy traps, sea sponges and, squirrels! Leading the charge on both PS5 and PS4 was multiplayer heist game **Hood: Outlaws & Legends**. Then on PS4 only was platformer **SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle For Bikini Bottom – Rehydrated**.

But enough about those. We're going to show our hand here and take a look at **Slay The Spire** on PS4 this month. As you ascend the procedurally generated floors of the titular tower in this roguelike deckbuilder, new cards and many deaths pave your way.

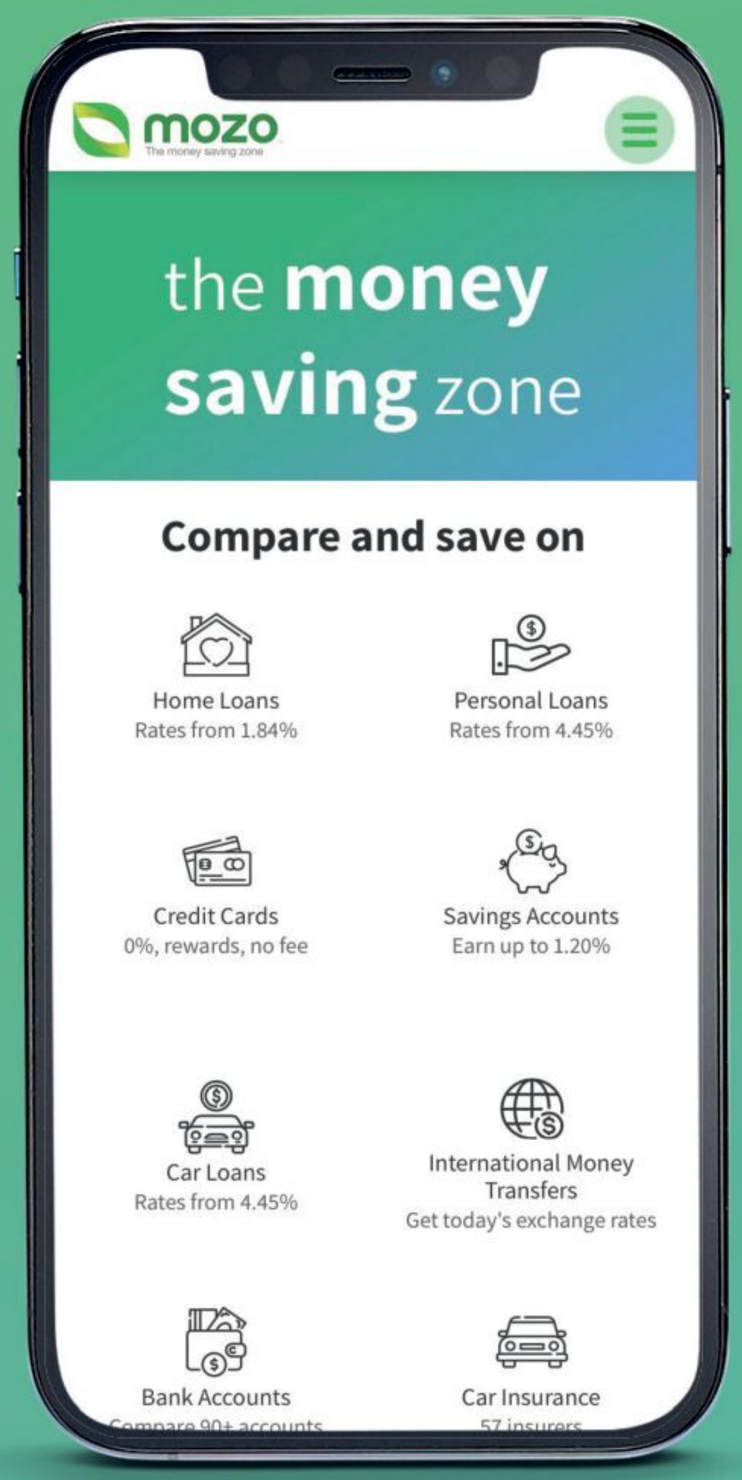
You start out as the Ironclad. Hitting hard and boasting high defence, this tanky deck is excellent for acquainting you with the business of spire slaying. From these straightforward beginnings, there's a lot of joy to be found in plumbing this game's mechanical depths even early on. Not only can this starter deck grow and flourish in surprising ways, but after your first failed ascent you unlock the Silent.

This deck lacks pure offensive might, instead whittling foes down to size with damage over time; you've got a fist full of knives, poisons, and more, delivering death by a thousand cuts to your enemies. This deck's the perfect counterpoint to the Ironclad... but the game feels like it *really* opens up when it introduces the Defect.

This is a mechanical oddity – in every sense – as this deck boasts the unique addition of orbs, allowing you to channel an array of elemental damage. With enough orbs charged up and in play, you can easily devastate your opponents.

Even after you've spent hours noodling around with the three aforementioned decks, you still have a whole other character called the Watcher to unlock. Offering plenty of mechanical variety and depth, Slay The Spire truly hits that roguelike sweet spot.





Compare over 1800 loans, savings & insurance products

mozo.com.au

mozo™
The money saving zone

RetroStation

98 A brief history of...

Sony controllers! All the ways we've got to grips with games



HIGHLIGHTS

CLASSIC GAME: THE SIMS 90 | FEATURE: THE BEST GAMES FOR EYETOY 92
A BRIEF HISTORY OF... CONTROLLERS 98



CLASSIC GAME

The Sims

Living the not so Sim-ple life





1



2



3



4



The 2000s brought us spiral hair gems, Avril Lavigne, and Groovy Chick everything – and also one of the best-selling games of all time: The Sims. The life simulator became a pop-culture phenomenon overnight and a cornerstone of sandbox gaming. Only PC players were able to board the launch bus to Sims city in 2000, however; we had to wait till 2003 to live our Big Brother dreams on PS2.

So let's fast forward a few years, to when The Sims upped sticks and finally arrived on console, having undergone some serious renovations. It came to us in glorious full 3D, and with a far more nimble camera than the PC version had. Thanks to the analogue sticks, we were spinning around more times than Kylie Minogue as we decorated the kitchen of our Y2K pad, which felt more immersive than it would have from the older version's four static angles.

SHOW ME THE SIMOLEONS

The only playable mode upon starting the game on PS2 was Get A Life, the series' first dedicated foray into story mode. In it, once you've created your Sim, they fall well and truly on their feet, taking up residence in an extravagantly large mansion. They are then quickly swept into their lover's arms to share a steamy kiss, followed by a blurred-out dip in the infamous heart-shaped hot tub. Living the dream!

Ah no, *dreaming* the dream. Just when your Sim seems to be living their best life, they are dragged from their idyllic reverie and slapped with harsh reality by their own mother – and she is far from happy. In truth, she's a nightmare to live with, and a menace for turning the radio on while your poor Sim was trying to have 40 winks. Yet she is surprisingly compliant when you ask her for a few simoleons (the game's currency) – §800, to be precise.

Your first story goal is to fly the nest. When you move into a new home you have a number of tasks to complete before you can progress. Some goals enable you to access paid services such as housekeeping, but most unlock items in the catalogue so you can purchase them. Although limited, Get A Life holds some items that you won't find elsewhere, such as a Teppanyaki table. The catalogue's also packed with staples that became classics, such as the §80 Werkbunnst Chair – if you know, you know. As you progress through the six stages, levelling up your life gets harder as the unlocks keep flowing.

You're also able to unlock a series of two-player minigames, adding yet another fresh feature into the mix. Each location lays out a scenario and gives you a typically timed goal for completion. Tasks vary from swindling unsuspecting Sims out of money to making friends with a certain number of 'Townies', and even stealing someone's food (an unforgivable crime). It's a great Sims twist on the typical PvP fare, allowing you to claim sweet victory for tidying up an apartment quicker than the mate sitting beside you. If you'd rather live in domestic harmony, you can run a home in multiplayer freeplay instead.

> **"Thanks to the analogue sticks we were spinning around more times than Kylie Minogue as we decorated our Y2K pad."**

SIM-PLY THE BEST

Unlocked once you've got your start in Get A Life, the classic freeform Sims experience is yours with just a tap on 'Play The Sims'. And as much as we love the new modes, classic play still reigns supreme. While adding wallpaper can be a bit of a faff while building, once you're used to the DualShock's sensitivity constructing builds and commanding your Sim is intuitive, meaning you can lead that dream life in no time. Having the ability to pan around freely as you build really is a blessing. It only falls down when it comes to furnishings. With technical storage limitations on the console, you're only able to place as much furniture as your Buy Mode meter allows. But if choosing the heart-shaped bed over the heart-shaped hot tub is your toughest decision that day, it's not all that bad – you win some, you lose some.

So whether you're running a harmonious home with a pal in multiplayer or flying solo, The Sims holds up admirably almost 20 years later, and its unique modes make it well worth a revisit – as Avril says, can we make it any more obvious? ■

1 The school bus waits for Cassandra Goth – for now.
2 PvP leaves you asking who really is friend or foe.
3 We've all made Sim versions of ourselves at one time or another, right?
4 Hopefully someone checks the pool's ladder before anyone jumps in...
5 Parties can make or break a friendship.

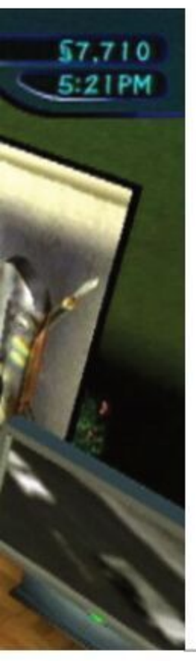


INFO

PUB EA Games
DEV Maxis, Edge Of Reality
RELEASED 2003

NEED TO KNOW

1 Completing the main story displays the first credit roll in Sims history.
2 Default neighbourhood Willville is a nod to creator Will Wright.
3 Sims can only own single-storey homes in the PlayStation 2 game.





THE LIST

ALL EYETOYS ON YOU

Vic Pheasey explores the best games for **EyeToy** on PS2

Before PSVR brought more affordable immersive gaming to us all on PS4 (never mind PSVR2 and PS5), PlayStation 2 witnessed the birth of EyeToy. It might seem quaint now, but in 2003 that little camera left us open-mouthed at the possibilities it offered for a new era of gaming.

We plugged in our cameras and waited patiently for the glowing dots to dance away on the home screen, not truly knowing what was in store. Little did we know that EyeToy would put us in the driving seat – literally. The idea of using our own bodies to control the game was revolutionary. It may have been superseded, but we still have a soft spot for it, so here are the games you shouldn't miss revisiting if you dig yours out for a play session.





EyeToy's basically a colour webcam with a built-in microphone – but it made new ways to play possible.





EyeToy: Play

FORMAT PS2 / **PUB** SCE / **DEV** LONDON STUDIO / **RELEASED** 2003

01 Packaged with EyeToy, Play was PlayStation's first trip into augmented reality. Voiced by impressionist Jon Culshaw and demonstrated by a dancing nan, the comedic video introduction briefs you on how to get started, step into the silhouette, and get ready to begin. With 12 games and a cast of characters to play alongside, all in a style reminiscent of Jamie Hewlett's art, it's undoubtedly the most memorable. Nostalgic minigames will have you washing windows in Wishi Washi and putting fast-moving pandas in their place in Kung Foo, playing solo or with your mates.



EyeToy: Groove

FORMAT PS2 / **PUB** SCE / **DEV** LONDON STUDIO / **RELEASED** 2004

02 Following the same formula as Beat Freak, a minigame from Play in which hitting CDs towards speakers in time with the track earns you a better score, Groove was EyeToy's lone dance-based title. Your goal is to strike the faces in time with the beat and light up the dancefloor, striking a few fabulous poses mid-song too. Features included going head-to-head for the ultimate dance-off and even a calorie burning tracker. Over 20 licensed songs were available, including tracks by Mis-Teeq, Groove Armada, and Las Ketchup – a real mixed bag, but variety is the spice of life, right?



EyeToy: Play 2

FORMAT PS2 / **PUB** SCE / **DEV** LONDON STUDIO / **RELEASED** 2004

03 Another series of minigames await us in the sequel to Play, but this time with far more objectives for each game, adding a little more variety within each round. For example, Mr Chef has you serving up some serious grub, but when you run out of menu items you'll have to hit the kitchen to prep fries and flip pancakes – and if you're that good, in between shifts Mr Chef himself challenges you to a cook-off to prove who's worthy of that coveted Michelin Star. Play 2 includes multiplayer games and is a great step up from its predecessor. It also features what could easily pass for an early version of PSVR icon Astro Bot in its little robot mascot.



EyeToy: Kinetic

FORMAT PS2 / **PUB** SCE / **DEV** LONDON STUDIO, NIKE MOTIONWORKS
RELEASED 2005

04 Peak fitness is the aim of the game with Kinetic. Nike Motionworks' input gave it a seriousness other titles lacked. Using motion capture, the in-game trainers can coach you through a 12-week programme. Alternatively, you can guide yourself throughout the four workout stages, or 'zones': cardio, combat, mind, and body and toning. Kinetic still delivers classic EyeToy fun with minigames during your workout, yet overall it has a sleeker feel. While other EyeToy titles were restricted to upper body movement, Kinetic included an additional wide-angle lens to ensure a full body workout.













No monkeys were captured or harmed while playing, we promise. Friendships may have ended.

EyeToy: Monkey Mania

FORMAT PS2 / **PUB** SCE / **DEV** JAPAN STUDIO / **RELEASED** 2005

05

Just when you'd thought you'd captured all of the runaway simians in PS1's Ape Escape, they've fled once more and are ready for four-player mayhem on Freaky Floaty Island.

Using their previous escapades as a base for the story, 50 minigames are available to play with up to three friends here. Admittedly, the marketing for this was predominantly aimed at kids, but who's to say that adults can't join in too?



Who *wouldn't* want to name and customise their own monkey? Unlike other EyeToy titles, Monkey Mania features a board game mode, allowing you and your friends to take it in turns to spin the wheel, move forward and collect Pipo monkeys. Whoever reaches the top of the island with the most Pipo monkeys in their possession wins – simple, right? Yes and no.

Not only can landing on certain markers earn you rewards, minigames, and even the ability to trade in items at the shop to help you along the way, they can also serve you and your Pipo pal with forfeits and a few misfortunes to delay your rise to the top. But there's no need to fear, you can always get your own back on the board by setting a few lethal traps yourself.

As well as this mode, there are plenty of other activities to choose from: bowling, baseball and a two-player game called Push And Shove – a bomb-fuelled, even more dangerous version of Jenga. Just a little word of advice: monkey around this island with heavy caution.

"Features a board game mode, allowing you and your friends to take it in turns."



Sega's heavyweights have arrived; it's your turn to get on it like Sonic.











Sega Superstars

FORMAT PS2 / **PUB** SEGA / **DEV** SONIC TEAM / **RELEASED** 2004

06 When Sega's world collides with PlayStation's in Sega Superstars, it's quite the mashup. 12 minigames are baked onto the disc; your hosts are some of Sega's finest characters. The company's most recognisable mascot takes a starring role – in one game you have to use your arms to guide Sonic through a tunnel, nabbing those glorious gold rings while dodging spiked bombs, all at top speed.

Other Sega classics include Virtua Fighter, where keikogi-clad series mascot Akira is waiting to take you on in a side-on brawl, and The House Of The Dead, in which you save distraught townspeople and whack oncoming zombies who are after their pound of flesh.

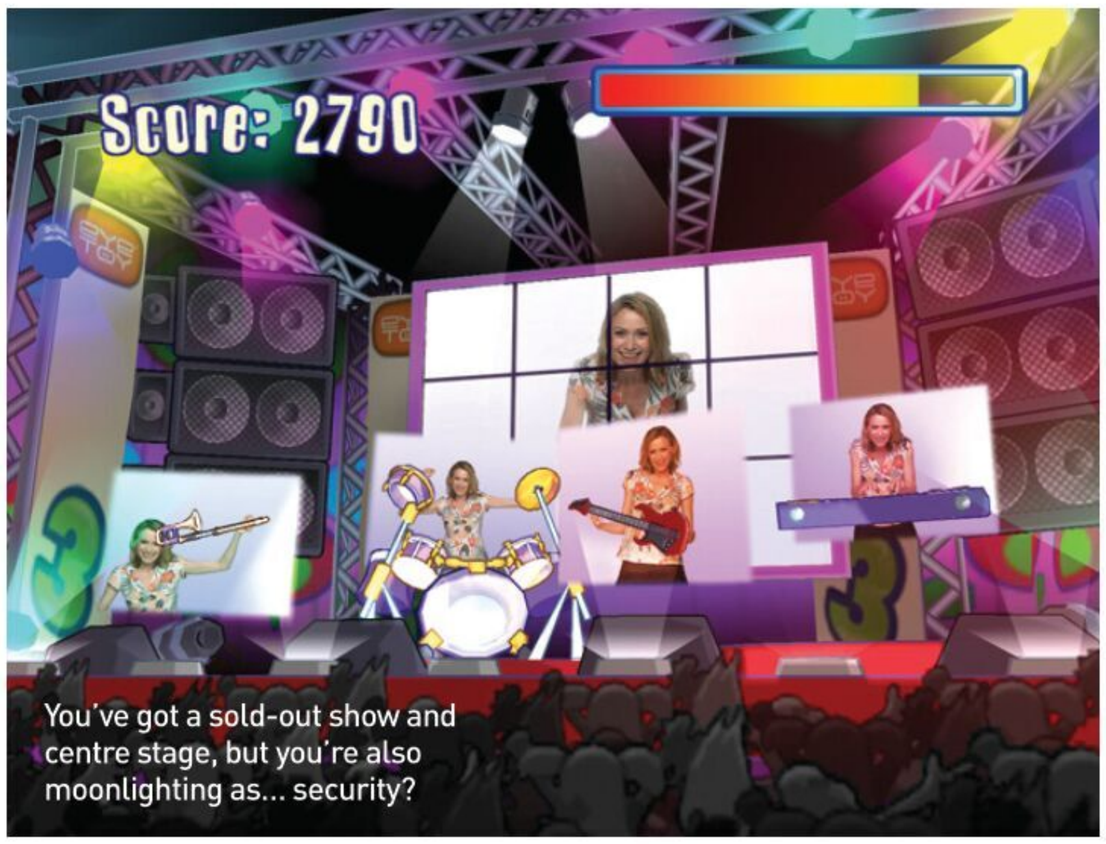
Mechanically, some minigames echo those in the Play titles; for example, The House Of The Dead plays in a similar vein to Kung Foo, while Samba De Amigo and Space Channel 5 naturally tick the rhythm game box, mirroring Beat Freak.

> **"Guide Sonic through a tunnel, nabbing those glorious gold rings at top speed."**

Other minigames, however, feel a little more niche.

Now, we're not knocking how innovative EyeToy was, yet in Crazy Taxi its use is a little underwhelming. Your main goal is to flag down taxis, using arm gestures and shouting to gain attention: the more animated you are, the higher your success rate (to the disdain of neighbours everywhere). The scenery, movement, and playability of other games, such as the careful rolling of Super Monkey Ball and Billy Hatcher, redeem the whole collection, though.





EyeToy: Play 3

FORMAT PS2 / **PUB** SCE / **DEV** LONDON STUDIO / **RELEASED** 2005

07 Unlike the two previous instalments, Play 3 doesn't force you to play a game of patience as up to four players can take part in the fun at any given time. In some minigames you compete, while others are more collaborative – for example, Be The Band allows you to recruit three other bandmates and rock the stage for a sell-out show, complete with a few stage dives. But there's also other work to be done; you'll have to keep overzealous fans from rushing the stage. If the popstar scene isn't for you, you can lead a calmer lifestyle instead and vie for the attention of a tiny kitten. Less groundbreaking than its predecessors, but still good fun.



EyeToy: AntiGrav

FORMAT PS2 / **PUB** SCE / **DEV** HARMONIX / **RELEASED** 2005

08 Developed by Harmonix, which would bring us one of PlayStation's most iconic series, Guitar Hero, just one year later, this brought a different style of gaming to EyeToy. You don't see yourself onscreen – instead you lean, jump, duck and even fly to successfully guide a futuristic hoverboarder to the finish line. Apollo 440's dynamic soundtrack booms as you perform tricks and collect combos, accruing points for racking up sequences in a similar manner to how you do in other extreme sports games. Fortunately in both Speed and Style modes, a movement tracker is always visible to help you position yourself for a flawlessly futuristic rail grind.



EyeToy: Play Sports

FORMAT PS2 / **PUB** SCE / **DEV** LONDON STUDIO / **RELEASED** 2006

09 'Sports' could be considered a loose term when it comes to EyeToy: Play Sports – we'd suggest 'chaos' as a more appropriate replacement. However, it was the first title in the Play series to focus solely on one umbrella activity. Over 100 minigames await, and this time around you're able to add four more players into the mix, taking the total to eight. There are plenty of sporting activities to take part in, with archery, rowing, long jump, golf, and even, er... catching fleas – though we're pretty certain that the last of those won't be a discipline at the next Olympics.



SpyToy

FORMAT PS2 / **PUB** SCE / **DEV** LONDON STUDIO / **RELEASED** 2005

10 Delivering a gloriously noughties time capsule, SpyToy sneakily appropriates stylistic elements from Bond's Die Another Day, immersing you in your role of a secret agent. Within the eight games, the more hands-on experiences are the best. One mission to track down a rogue agent to perform photofits, and another that involves skydiving into the mysterious syndicate's headquarters are highlights. Another task includes destroying viruses within the hacked SIA mainframe. You might spot that your boss resembles James Bond, but it's your job to decipher which actor – call it an off-the-books mission.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF Sony controllers

You've got to hand it to them



Known by fans as the 'flight stick', the '96 Analog Stick was Sony's first analogue controller.



PS1's first controller was designed to be the right weight and shape to use in many situations – even lying down.



◎ and ⊗ represent 'yes' and 'no' with △ symbolising a point-of-view, and □ a piece of paper for menus.

Thanks to a patch, the DualShock 4 can now be used on PS3. For four-player, PS1 and PS2 require a Multitap. **DualShock 4's lightbar can convey info, like Alien: Isolation's sensor.** Dropping the 'shock', PS5's DualSense emphasises haptics.

SHOCK HORROR

Rumble in the station

Returning to the 1994 launch PlayStation controller these days, you can feel the lack of the analogue sticks we've come to love. The Dual Analog Controller introduced them in '97 before being quickly supplanted by the DualShock mere months later. Replacing the plastic grooves with textured round tips, rumble supported huge games like Crash, Spyro, and Tekken.

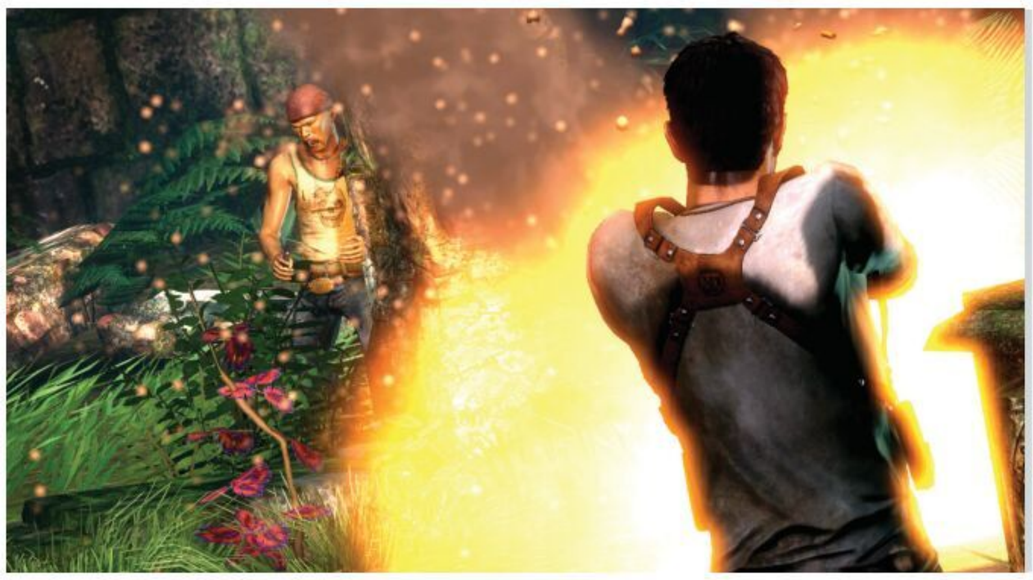




The DualShock 4 was the first big shape shakeup in about ten years.



PS4 launch games were inventive – Infamous had it emulate a spray can.



Launch PS3 games required motion controls, meaning you had to shake your wrists to aim grenades in the first Uncharted only.



PS Move controllers were intended to kickstart a motion-controller platform in and of itself. Later, they were retrofitted to become PSVR's primary wagglers.



BANANA-RAMA

PS3's slow return to basics

Much was made of E3 2005's fruit-shaped PS3 controller. But PS3 launched with the stripped-back Sixaxis instead, a wireless, motion-sensing pad without vibration (because of a potential lawsuit). Sony President Phil Harrison even called rumble "last-gen". But a year after launch the DualShock 3 brought it back as standard.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 1 AUGUST

THE NOT-E3 ISSUE

The future is here! After the big mid-year game announcement rush, we'll round-up everything that rocks.

WAR THUNDER

New?
GET YOUR
FREE
BONUS

PLAY NOW FOR FREE
WARTHUNDER.COM/FLY







Windows STEAM Mac oculus VIVE

PS4 XBOX ONE PS5 XBOX SERIES X|S

© 2009—2018 by Gaijin Entertainment.
All rights reserved.

12
www.pegi.info